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COMMENTARY

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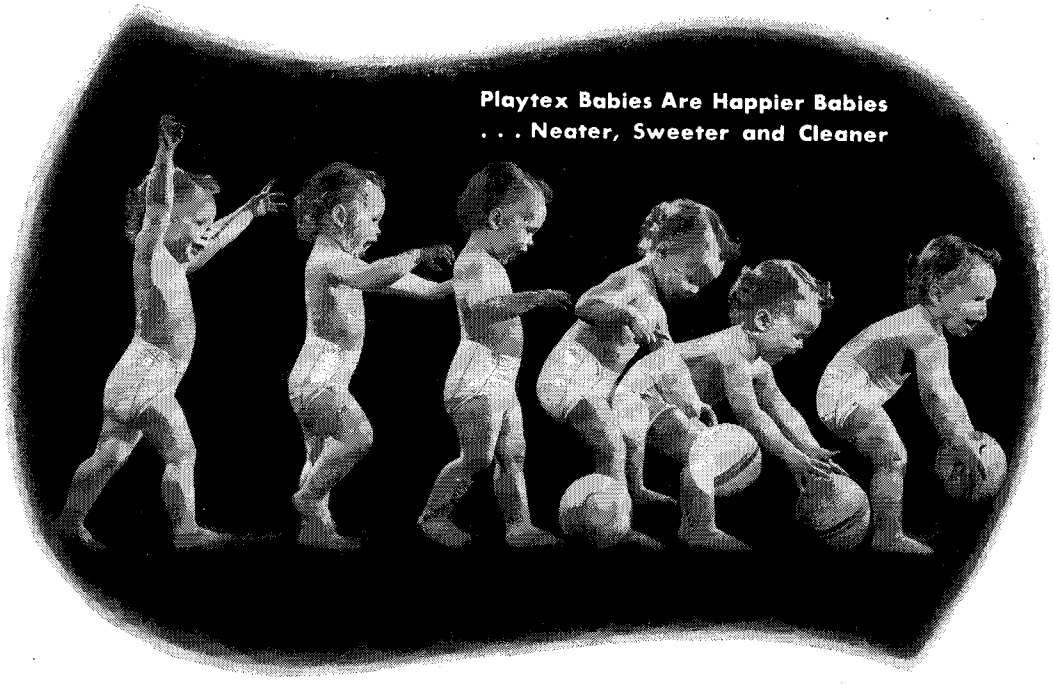

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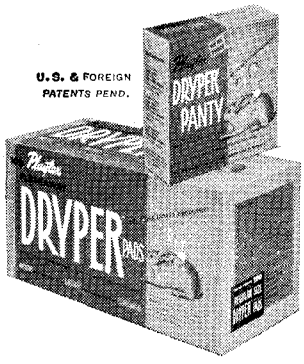

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COMMENTARY

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IN FORTHCOMING ISSUES OF

COMMENTARY

Is There an American Political Idea? *Daniel J. Boorstin*

No nation has been more articulate than America in insisting that there is a unique idea at the foundation of its "way of life," or more incapable of articulating what this is. An illuminating essay on the American political tradition by the author of *The Lost World of Thomas Jefferson.*

The McCarthy Method: Its Past and Future *Nathan Glazer*

Some lesser-known episodes in the political history of the controversial Senator from Wisconsin are here discussed, and the evolution of his method from dry run to flood tide of success is traced and analyzed.

Soviet Anti-Semitism Splits Israel's "Left" *Mark Alexander*

The dismay aroused in the democratic world by the Prague trial and Moscow allegations of a "doctors' plot" was felt with a double sharpness in Israel. Mark Alexander reports at first hand on people's and parties' reactions to the Communist anti-Semitic campaign, and the confusion and split in the pro-Soviet Mapam.

"Roxborough" Seven Years Later *Granville Hicks*

Mr. Hicks's *Small Town,* published in 1946, told the story of social change in an upstate New York community under the pressures of depression, war, and technological progress. Following last November's national election, Mr. Hicks took another sounding, to find Roxborough more and more giving up its rural self-sufficiency to join—for good and ill—the general stream of our increasingly urban society.

The Lord's Watchman *Sylvia Rothchild*

Mrs. Rothchild offers a granddaughter's affectionate translation, together with her own preface, of a personal memoir written by her grandfather, one of those millions who fled a hard life in Europe for one only a little less hard in America—but who was able to leave this moving record of a life lived in dignity.

The Irish American, Fact and Fancy *Peter Kavanagh*

Writing with unsentimental identification, Mr. Kavanagh asks what's Irish about the Irish on these shores, and what next?

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COMMENTARY

SOVIET ANTI-SEMITISM IN HIGH GEAR

What Can the Kremlin Hope to Gain?

PETER MEYER

IT IS a rare Cassandra that is up to the job these days. At least in the predicting of totalitarian horrors. Things always turn out worse than the gloomiest pessimist would have expected.

The anti-Semitic drive that went into high gear with the Prague trial of Rudolf Slansky *et al.* is now moving at a terrifying speed. The anti-Semitic big lie, always in the realm of the unbelievable, has in a few weeks reached the edge of the unimaginable. Hardly had the Prague defendants been hanged when the Socialist Unity (Communist) party in East Germany discovered a widespread "espionage and sabotage plot" headed by a former East German Politburo member, Paul Merker, and the Bonn Bundestag deputy Kurt Müller (who had been lured into East Germany and arrested there in March 1950). It was in this case no easy task to round up a respectable number of "Zionists" and "Jewish bourgeois nationalists"; there are almost no Jews in high party or government posts in East Germany. But old Chekists are not easily daunted: Paul Merker, according to the best information a Gentile, was nevertheless accused of taking part in a Zionist plot. You don't therefore have to be a Jew to qualify as a Zionist conspirator; it is enough to fall into the category of what Dr. Goebbels used to call *Judenknechte*—"lackeys of the Jews."

At about the same time, Gerhart Eisler, East Germany's propaganda chief, was fired from his job. At this writing, he is still not behind bars; but considering his past "deviations," his knowledge of the Communist underground, and his half-Jewish origin, he is not exactly what you would call a good life insurance risk. It was not only bail that he forfeited when he fled from the United States aboard the "Batory" a few years ago.

As in the case of the Prague trial, the East German arrests were only a prelude to things to come. Within a few days, squads of

---

THE Prague trial of fourteen leaders of the Communist party of Czechoslovakia, eleven of whom were Jewish, was, as every newspaper reader knows, almost immediately followed by accusations against six Jewish doctors in Moscow, by the flight of a good part of the Jewish community remaining in East Germany, and by hints in all the satellite countries that "Zionists," "Jewish bourgeois nationalists," and persons having connections with the Joint Distribution Committee—which includes just about every Jew behind the Iron Curtain—were to be considered "imperialist" agents. PETER MEYER, who edited the text of the Prague trials published in the last issue of COMMENTARY and contributed an analysis of their meaning, and whose article "The Jewish Purge in the Satellite Countries" (September 1952) forecast the increasing use of anti-Semitism as a weapon of Communist policy, here comments on these latest developments.

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secret police were descending on Jewish homes in an eager hunt for "Zionist agents"; everybody who at any time and in any way had been associated with the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee was a special object of suspicion, and since there was hardly a Jewish survivor of Nazism to whom this charitable agency hadn't lent a hand in the first postwar period, almost every Jew in Europe fell into this category. Fortunately Berlin is one place where it is still relatively easy to pass through the Iron Curtain; in a few days' time several hundred of the few thousands of East German Jews, among them the chairmen of the Jewish religious communities of Leipzig, Dresden, and Erfurt, the chief of the East German President's Chancellery, Leo Zuckermann, and a Communist deputy to the East German "parliament," Julius Meyer, reached the Western sector. What awaits those who tarried too long was evident from a statement by a not yet liquidated member of the Communist Central Committee, Hans Jendrzetzky, who demanded the virtual exclusion of Jews from public life, calling them enemies of the state. In the meantime, the East German Foreign Minister, George Dertinger, head of the Communist-controlled Christian Democratic Union, was arrested on charges of treason; the purge struck at Catholics and Protestants as well as Jews.

THE Berlin events were still in the headlines when a dispatch from Budapest announced the arrest of Lajos Stoeckler, president of the Hungarian Jewish community. It is almost superfluous to repeat the charges: espionage, conspiring with the Joint Distribution Committee, illicit dealings in foreign currencies. Stoeckler was one of the most servile of the Communist creatures. He had been shoved down the throats of the Jewish community after a Communist campaign of intimidation caused all who had opposed him to be driven from their positions and arrested. Stoeckler had justified and defended every Communist crime against Hungarian Jewry, including the mass deportations of Jews from the cities in 1951. All this did not help him; he was still a Jew. His arrest was a signal for new persecutions; according to latest reports, deportations of Jews from Budapest and Szeged have been resumed.

In the meantime, Poland demanded the recall of the Israeli ambassador from Warsaw and started several prosecutions of "Zionist agents." The Rumanian radio announced the forthcoming prosecution of Ana Pauker. In Czechoslovakia, according to Yugoslav reports, Jews were ejected from apartments, chased from queues in the streets, and refused service in food stores. An official decree abolished food rations for former businessmen and other "bourgeois elements"; although Jews were not mentioned, the present atmosphere leaves no doubt that they will bear the brunt of the new law. Food is in catastrophically short supply in Czechoslovakia and to lose one's ration is to be virtually condemned to starvation.

But horrible and revelatory as all these developments were, they were overshadowed by the report from Moscow of a "doctors' plot." Nine doctors, six of them Jews, were accused of having conspired with the Joint Distribution Committee in bringing about the deaths of the Politburo members Andrei A. Zhdanov (*obit* 1948) and Alexander S. Shcherbakov (*obit* 1945), and of having attempted to "shorten the lives" of several prominent leaders of the Red Army and Navy. This dispelled even the shadow of a doubt that the Communist anti-Jewish drive was directed from Moscow. If the Prague trial with its lurid tale of a "Zionist conspiracy" recalled the Czarist-invented and Nazi-popularized legend of the Elders of Zion, the Moscow accusation harked back to the Middle Ages with their charges of Jewish poisonings and ritual murder.

But the catalogue of "Jewish crimes" was not yet exhausted. F. Kozlov, secretary of the Leningrad regional party organization, wrote in the magazine *Communist* that a number of "alien and foreign elements" had been exposed and purged in Leningrad, including persons connected with such "bourgeois nationalist counter-revolutionary or-

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ganizations" as the [Jewish Socialist] Bund. The newspaper *Red Fleet* described as a representative criminal type one Greenberg, who was charged with stealing state property from public warehouses. The Ukrainian *Pravda* reported the uncovering of large-scale embezzlements in the economic administrations in Kiev, Odessa, Kharkov, and Voroshilovgrad, concluding with the statement that "the profound hatred of the people was aroused by all these Kahns and Yaroshetzkys, Grinshteins, Pers, Kaplans, and Polyakovs," many of whom had already been sentenced to death and shot. Communist newspapers in Latvia and Lithuania write in a similar vein. The Moscow daily *Komsomolskaya Pravda* denounced a blind man, Alexander Lazarevich Cohen, for exploiting Russian orphans sent to him by a children's home to assist him in his work. Fagin is thus added to the poisoners and embezzlers—Communism is apparently bent on reviving every anti-Semitic canard, medieval and modern. All this is accompanied by a denunciation of those who through their "lack of vigilance" permitted "alien elements" to obtain jobs as doctors, clerks, accountants, etc. The big pogrom is on, and anyone who is behindhand in exposing the "cosmopolitan traitors and thieves" will have to look out.

THE charges against the Moscow doctors also shed light on another aspect of the anti-Semitic purge. Analyzing the Czech faction struggle before the Slansky trial, I wrote, in COMMENTARY of September 1952: "There is no question that there were different factions among the Communist leaders in the satellite countries, competing among themselves and denouncing each other in Moscow. It is quite possible that these factions speculated on the victory of different groups in the Moscow Politburo and that Slansky and Ana Pauker bet on the wrong horse." This hypothesis would now seem to be confirmed. And the key to the explanation is to be found in the name of the alleged victim of the doctors' plot. Andrei A. Zhdanov was Stalin's comrade-in-arms and heir apparent. He died unexpectedly in August 1948, and all those close to him were later quietly purged. The party leadership took care to stress that his was a natural death; a death certificate, signed by five leading physicians, was prominently reproduced in the party press. Now, four years later, he is suddenly made the victim of an imperialist-Zionist conspiracy, and the police are openly upbraided for their negligence in failing to prevent his murder.

To one with even a slight acquaintance with Soviet history, the tale has a strangely familiar ring. In 1934, another man was Stalin's best comrade-in-arms. He too was a member of the Politburo and secretary of the Leningrad organization. And he, too, was considered Stalin's most likely successor. His name was Sergei Myronovich Kirov. Like Zhdanov he was popular, too popular. At the 17th Congress of the Communist party his speech got more applause than the Big Boss's own droning oration. Its theme: How Beautiful It Is to Live in a Socialist Country.

This beautifulness quickly passed for him. On December 1, 1934, Kirov was shot to death by a young man named Leonid Nikolayev. Reprisals followed at once. Stalin himself went to Leningrad to investigate the case. One hundred and four men, arrested long before the murder and absolutely unconnected with it, were shot without trial in the Leningrad jails. Nikolayev and several local Leningrad leaders were secretly tried, and all executed. Many thousands of Leningraders, Communist and non-Communist, were deported to Siberia. Zinoviev was given five years and Kamenev ten years in prison for "moral responsibility," though no evidence was offered of their having had any connection with the crime. But in the least publicized and most sensational of these secret trials, the heads of the Leningrad GPU, Medved and Zaporozhets, were sent to jail for having—as the official communiqué stated—"possessed information about the preparation of the attempt . . . and [having] failed to take the necessary preventive measures . . . although they had every opportunity to do so."

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All this happened in December 1934 and January 1935. For eighteen months thereafter, everything seemed quiet. The Soviet Union had just adopted the "most democratic constitution in the world," "guaranteeing" full civil rights and liberties to all, and the gullible in the Western world (of whom there are still many left) were hailing the great democratic turn in the Bolshevik revolution.

In July 1936, however, the storm broke. The era of the great show trials began. One after another, party leaders, ministers, generals, and admirals confessed to treason, sabotage, and conspiring with Hitler. In all these trials there was a central point: every one of the successively "exposed" conspiratorial centers had organized the attempt on Kirov. Finally, in March 1938, the chief of the GPU, Yagoda himself, confessed to having been the chief instigator of the assassination. The confessions contradicted each other, were full of physical impossibilities and arrant nonsense,* but what did that matter?

In the end, almost all the old Bolsheviks and millions of more obscure victims paid for the assassination of Kirov, organized, as the Soviet Union officially admitted, by the GPU.

But Kirov's assassination was not the only one confessed to by Yagoda and his fellow defendants under Vishinsky's delicate prompting. The former GPU chief Menzhinsky, the Communist leader Kuibyshev, the writer Maxim Gorky, and other important figures were among their victims. Their deaths, when they occurred, had been attributed to natural causes. But in 1938 their physicians confessed to having killed them, on the orders of Yagoda, by poisoning and malpractice.

Substitute Zhdanov for Kirov, Beria for Yagoda, and the nine doctors for the Kremlin physician Dr. Levin and his associates, who confessed to the murder of Gorky, and what illuminating perspectives are disclosed on the past and future!

Yet there is something new in the current allegations. Many of the 1936-38 defendants were Jews, but this was not officially stressed. It was a "Trotskyite-Bukharinist," not a "Zionist" conspiracy. There is one—*only* one—new feature in the present script, and *that is its anti-Semitic character.*

We have an interesting piece of evidence to show that anti-Semitism was dragged into the "doctors' plot" by the heels. The medical report on Zhdanov's death, published in *Pravda* on September 1, 1948, was signed by Drs. Yegorov, Vinogradov, Fedorov, Vasilenko, and Mayorov, all non-Jews. Three of these—Yegorov, Vinogradov, and Mayorov—are now accused of being members of the criminal conspiracy. But the names of six new physicians were added. These are: M. S. Vovsi, M. B. Kogan, B. B. Kogan, A. S. Feldman, Y. G. Ettinger, A. Grinshtein—all of them Jews.

It is evident that open anti-Semitism has now become established Soviet policy. Soviet moves abroad, propaganda campaigns at home, intra-party struggles, whatever their other reasons, will be accompanied by attacks on the Jews. Why?

There are three probable answers to this question, each of them containing a part of the truth.

1. The Jews must be made responsible for all the failures of the regime—they serve as convenient and traditional scapegoats.

2. American democracy, still popular among the peoples of the Soviet empire in spite of the furious and incessant vilification of the United States, must be compromised by associating it with an international Jewish conspiracy.

3. And, finally, reactionary, fascist, and Nazi allies must be won over by an appeal to their anti-Semitism.

But does it pay? Isn't Stalin losing more than he gains when he exchanges his old support on the left for new allies among the Nazis, fascists, Moslem reactionaries, and Peronistas?

There is a misunderstanding behind this question. Stalin is not *substituting* an alliance with the "right" for his manipulation

*For an excellent analysis of these trials, see Hugo Dewar's *Assassins at Large* (Beacon Press).

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of the "left." He is trying to play both cards at once. The national fronts that his agents now propagandize for in many countries are intended to rally both left-wing *and* right-wing support behind the standards of "national sovereignty," "peace," and "neutralism." Of course, the rightists must be offered something concrete and tempting—Soviet anti-Semitism. But the "leftists," Stalin may well believe, will serve voluntarily and without compensation. Didn't many of them swallow the 1936 Moscow trials without batting an eye, recommending them to Western public opinion as proof of the "higher Soviet democracy"? Didn't they condone the Hitler-Stalin pact, promptly putting it out of mind as soon as Hitler forced the Soviet Union to stand up and fight Germany? Do they not support the mendacious Communist campaign for Julius and Ethel Rosenberg at this very moment, when international Communism has begun openly to harry and persecute Jews? Don't they debate whether it is "really" anti-Semitism, hiding the plain truth from themselves and others in a cloud of metaphysical distinctions? Don't the springs of their wrath flow furiously at the mention of what they call witch hunts in the United States, while they greet the grim realities of the Soviet purges with an apathetic grimace? Why should Stalin feel anything but profound contempt for fellow-travelers and neutralists, not to speak of "careful and balanced non-Communists"?*

But this is still not the whole story. Inevitably, we try to explain every totalitarian move in rational terms; we assume it is based on a conscious and clever calculation. We know that there is a system to the totalitarian madness.

But we sometimes forget that there is also madness in the totalitarian system. We know what advantages in loot and demagogy Hitler got from his persecution of the Jews. But we also know that in the end he lost more than he won. And the Russian Great Purge of the 30's resulted in such a weakening of the Soviet regime that only Western help saved it from going down before Germany in World War II.

Totalitarian systems have their own fateful logic. As they cannot refrain from reaching out to seize and exploit foreign countries, their goal the world itself, until they unite the world against them, so they cannot and don't want to call a halt to the "liquidating" of ever newer groups of their subjects. The more their difficulties, the greater the purges. But each purge creates new difficulties and conflicts. What started as a shrewd move against some manufactured "traitors" swells into a monstrous saturnalia of denunciation and terror involving a large proportion of the population. Nobody short of Stalin can moderate or halt the bloodletting without himself becoming suspect. The instigators of the terror become captives of their own policy. Inventing imperialist Trotskyist-Zionist plots, they perhaps end by believing their own inventions.

This was certainly the case with Hitler. Many thought Stalin was different. The lunatic purges of the 30's should have already given them pause. And the present

*This new line is not a novel development in Russian imperialist policy. Consider this shrewd characterization of Russian policy in the two previous centuries: "Enlightenment was the slogan of Czarism in Europe during the eighteenth century as was National Liberation in the nineteenth. There was no land-grab, no outrage, no repression on the part of Czarism which was not carried out under the pretext of enlightenment, of liberalism, of the liberation of nations. And the childish Western European liberals believed it right down to Gladstone, while the equally simple conservatives believed just as tenaciously in phrases about the protection of legitimacy, the maintenance of order, of religion, of the European balance of powers, of the sanctity of treaties—slogans which official Russia simultaneously utters. Russian diplomacy alone was allowed to be legitimist and revolutionary, conservative and liberal, orthodox and enlightened in the same breath. One can understand the contempt with which a Russian diplomat looks down on the 'educated' West." The quotation is from an article which appeared in the Russian emigré journal *Sotsialdemokrat* in Geneva in 1890. The author is Friedrich Engels. (The English translation is quoted from *The Russian Menace to Europe*, by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, selected and edited by Paul W. Blackstock and Bert F. Hoselitz, Free Press, 1952.)

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anti-Semitic campaign, with its paranoid horror stories, compulsive repetition of a previous pattern, absurdities, and contempt for reality, is no product of shrewd calculation alone. World Communism's adoption of open and organized anti-Semitism and genocide as means of national and international policy has not only erased the last moral difference between the Nazi and Soviet rulers, it is also proof that totalitarian regimes, regardless of their ideological origins, find themselves driven along the same fatal course.

But before it reaches the end of its course, Soviet totalitarianism can destroy additional millions by executions, slow murder in the concentration camps, genocide—and war. The more lunatic the Soviet drive against groups in the lands it dominates, and the more violent its accusations against the free world, the nearer we come to war. Our answer to the threat of Communist irrationality can be neither timid appeasement nor a despairing reconciliation of ourselves to the inevitability of war. Wisdom still offers a way; by the demonstration of strength, intelligently and firmly exercised, we can give the Kremlin pause, recapture the initiative, and force it back on a permanent—and for it disastrous—defensive.

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GERMAN ANTI-AMERICANISM: EAST & WEST ZONES

Clinical Notes for a Diagnosis—and Remedy

NORBERT MUHLEN

AN HOUR after the American military train to West Germany left West Berlin it was brought to an unscheduled halt. We were at a small station, somewhere in Soviet Germany. Although it was dark outside, I could read the legends on some of the red and blue streamers floating from the house tops: "The railroad workers of Germany pledge eternal friendship to the peoples of the Soviet Union and the People's Democracies." And: "Our national defense forces protect us from the Anglo-American germ murderers." And, largest of them all: "Ami, go home!" The "Amis" were, of course, the Americans.

Supervised by a uniformed stationmaster, two old men and a girl in her teens were inspecting the rails under our train. At the end of the platform, two policemen and, somewhat apart and aloof, a Soviet Russian soldier, all three with rifles underslung, eyed our train with cold hostility. The only other person in sight stood near my car, a pretty girl with a heavy rucksack on her back, and a row of medals on her blue blouse that marked her as a member of the Free German Youth, a Communist organization.

From the window of the next compartment an American soldier leaned out and called to the girl: "Hya, Kamerad!" There were a few seconds of silence. She seemed not to have heard him. Then, speaking in a guarded, serious voice, almost without inflection, she said in English: "Ami, come back."

A moment later the stationmaster barked some orders and our train pulled out toward the West.

THE departure of the "Ami" was being demanded day and night, in word and melody, over radio and public loudspeaker, on posters, banners, and written on walls everywhere in East Germany. But the real feeling of the overwhelming majority of East Germans was expressed in those murmured, almost inaudible words uttered from the platform of a lonely way station by this girl of the Free German Youth.

The anti-American campaign had been started in earnest in East Germany a few weeks before the invasion of North Korea, in the late spring of 1950, and has been going at full blast ever since, hammering away at America as the chief enemy of peace, progress, and plenty, the global warmonger, the atom-bomb and germ-war criminal against humanity, the power that had committed unheard of atrocities in the past, was still committing them in the present, and preparing even more horrible ones for the wars of conquest and rapine it was planning for the future. Particularly, the leveling of German cities and the general ruination of Germany in the last war was an exclusively American "crime." Only yesterday the Soviets had been boasting of the military prowess and ruthlessness that had brought them victory "singlehanded" over the Hitlerites; now they were commiserating with a Germany defeated, and victimized in defeat, by the Western imperialist barbarians.

Cartoons in the East German press personify the United States as a bull-necked,

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THE emergence and spread in Western Europe of a kind of anti-American feeling more virulent than anything known before has been one of the most disquieting—and puzzling—factors in postwar transatlantic relations. T. R. Fyvel dealt with the causes of this phenomenon in England in our December 1952 number. Now NORBERT MUHLEN shows that, while some of the same factors operate in West Germany, they are reinforced by more than a few additional ones. Mr. Muhlen was born in Germany in 1910, and had to flee his country in 1933 when Hitler came to power. Since then he has been journalistically and politically active in many countries of the free world, has published several books in English or German, and written for innumerable magazines. His latest book, *The Return of Germany: A Tale of Two Countries,* will be out in March, under the imprint of Henry Regnery.

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hard-faced general taking orders from diabolical-looking civilians with hooked noses that evoke memories of Julius Streicher's Jew-baiting *Stürmer*. America itself is pictured as a country of concentration camps filled with workers, writers, Negroes, and friends of peace in general, while FBI agents—mounted—fire on masses of people clamoring for peace and bread. This is the kind of tyranny America aims to spread over the whole world—so says Soviet propaganda.

The only reason why the English language is still taught in some East German schools and universities—although no longer in many others—is, as the Communist students' paper has explained, the interest in "the national peace movements . . . and the great peace fighters in America and England—Howard Fast, Albert Maltz, Stefan Heym, R. Palme Dutt, Sean O'Casey, and many others."

And still, most East Germans, like the girl on that autumn night of 1952, continue to react to the shouted chorus of "Ami go home!" with an "Ami come back!" How Soviet anti-American propaganda has backfired was demonstrated quite impressively in 1951, when the East German press reported at length and under big headlines how Josephine Baker had been refused service in a New York night club. I discussed this story with a number of East Germans, and they all assured me that, "naturally," they didn't believe a word of it. Communist propaganda had overshot its mark so often that it is now met with automatic disbelief even when it has some truth in it.

But there is a deeper reason for the failure of the "hate America" campaign. Soviet propaganda prates constantly about the freedom, progress, and happiness of life in East Germany itself, in the other satellite countries, and, most of all, in the Soviet Union. From their own personal experience most of the East Germans know that all this is lies. So they assume that all Soviet propaganda against the United States is equally a lie, indeed, that the opposite must be true. Many show themselves aware that the Soviet version of "American" reality is really the projected picture of the Soviet reality that they themselves know only too well.

"Potato bugs" is the derisive label given to charges the Soviets level at America. For the "hate America" campaign had begun with the story that American planes had dropped Colorado beetles—an insect popularly called "potato bug"—over East Germany in order to destroy her potato crop (and also by way of training American aviators for germ warfare, and at the same time opening up a market for Wall Street's insecticides). But the East Germans never spotted any bug-carrying American planes, and they soon learned the real reason why their potato fields were full of beetles, and why they were unable to get rid of them—unlike West Germany, which had also been visited by the pests. East German insect-control experts had been fired as non-Communists, and East Germany's stocks of insecticide had been transferred to Poland on Russian orders. By 1952 people in East Germany were sentenced to jail just for muttering "potato bug."

Any credence given to the charge of warmongering against America has increased rather than taken away from her popularity. Quite a few East Germans with whom I talked in 1952 said: *"Lieber ein Ende mit Schrecken als ein Schrecken ohne Ende"*—better an end with terror, than a terror without end.

One point made by Soviet propaganda the East Germans do take at face value: that America is the main antagonist of the Soviets on the world scene. Accordingly they tend to believe, or at least to hope, that America is working energetically to weaken and eventually overthrow Communist rule in East Europe, just as they know from their own experience that Soviet Russia is working assiduously to weaken and eventually overthrow the rule of "Wall Street" in the West. Many East Germans who had escaped to the West told me of their disappointment when they learned that America—far from being war-minded at all—seemed rather inclined to seek "peaceful co-existence" with the Communist world.

In little, private gestures which are almost public demonstrations and yet so unpolitical that they are hard to cope with officially, East Germans show their pro-American feelings—when, for instance, they wear brightly checkered shirts and *Ringelsöckchen,* socks with loud vertical stripes that are considered particularly American; when they play and dance American jazz; even when they admit their taste for American

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movies, Coca-Cola, and chewing gum—all these having been denounced by the Communists as especially despicable instruments of corruption.

IN MARKED contrast to its failure in East Germany, anti-American propaganda has borne rich harvest in West Germany. True, it has rarely produced violent and genuine hatred, and it is hard to decide whether it is a majority, or a very substantial minority, that responds to it. But it is also true that many West Germans have come to dislike America rather intensely, and in terms of distorted stereotypes. In this writer's opinion, anti-American feeling in West Germany has become more widespread and determined during the past year, and is still on the rise.

A not inconsiderable part of this feeling—though by no means all of it—is due to Soviet propaganda that seeks to direct general fears and insecurities, as well as latent resentments, into anti-American channels. The Communists know that they cannot hope to create any pro-Soviet feeling among the West Germans, who have learned too much from prisoners of war returned from Russia, and from expellees and refugees from East Germany, to be susceptible to illusions about the Communist reality. But many West Germans, convinced that most American propaganda against Soviet Russia is true, assume that much of what the Russians say against America is likewise true. No longer hoping to draw West Germany closer to themselves, the Soviets can at least try to draw her away from America. According to Stalin's own words, disunity among the "capitalist countries" has now become a mainstay of Soviet policy.

"It matters very much to us," wrote Berlin's Mayor Ernst Reuter recently in the magazine *Der Monat*, "that anti-Americanism be recognized as a weapon in the Soviet fight against us." This weapon could persuade Germans to stand by neutrally and passively instead of taking measures to defend themselves in a conflict between East and West.

A dance act I saw in a shabby night club on Hamburg's waterfront expressed the mood of many West Germans. A young girl, nude but for a coquettish nightcap that identified her to the audience as the symbol of Germany, was wooed, first by a Russian who alternately played the balalaika and threatened her with a whip; then by a mustachioed Frenchman who cavorted with her gallantly; then by a wooden-faced Britisher who did nothing at all to win her favor; and finally by an American who chewed gum, had pockets bulging with bottles and cigarettes, and hummed a children's song. But the nude girl rejected them all. Then, as the four foreigners pulled out their guns and began firing at each other, a German boy appeared from the wings and danced away with the girl, peacefully and happily. Acts similar in point were performed in almost every political cabaret; one was put into a movie; and all were applauded.

Opinion polls have found virtual unanimity among Germans in saying that personal contact with American soldiers has been infinitely more pleasant than with their Russian counterparts. But this did not prevent large numbers of those interviewed from expressing dislike of both powers, with about one-third of the respondents revealing almost identically hostile stereotypes about both Russians and Americans.

TO SOME degree, these attitudes merely reflect West German resentment of the continuing occupation by foreigners, and their slowly recovering self-confidence.* This had led to the formation of hostile stereotypes that are extended from the soldiers of the occupying powers to cover the national characters of the countries they come from. These new prejudices have, in the case of America, merged widely with century-old stereotypes about our country. What the unfriendly or hostile prejudices of the "anti-American" West Germans amount to was summed up in a phrase I often heard in West Germany: "The Americans are Russians with creased pants." Or Americans are like Russians, only less so.

In the eyes of many West Germans, both the Russians and the Americans are "primitive"—or, more politely, "young people" (or "childish," "naive," "simple-minded"). What makes the revival of the traditional Old

*In 1952, according to the findings of EMNID, the Bielefeld Institute for Market and Opinion Research, only 14 per cent of West Germans saw in the occupation of their country a "welcome protection," 35 per cent "an inevitable necessity," and 33 per cent an "undesirable burden"; 19 per cent gave no opinion.

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World prejudices against newer countries so dangerous now is that it is joined to a second stereotype of much more recent origin—that America, driven like Russia by greed for power, is out to impose her own inferior way of life on the world. To a substantial minority of West Germans "the" American and "the" Russian are both "tough" and "arrogant," if not "brutal" and even "cruel." "The" American is thought of as "well-dressed" and "worldly," while "the" Russian strikes them as more primitive and less veneered. But though there is much talk about the "Russian soul," which swings between extremes of goodness and bestiality, no mention is ever made of an "American soul."

As in all cases of generalized group prejudice, anti-American clichés are based on a few actual experiences and rational observations that—for reasons deep-set in the nature and the situation of the prejudiced—are overemphasized and distorted. Thus, the hostile belief that America lusts for power and world rule, widespread in all Europe as well as in Western Germany, is the defensive reaction of a continent down-graded in relation to a new world power. In Germany's case, the emotional factors are both deeper and more intense than in other countries, for obvious reasons—the hugeness of the Third Reich's crimes against peace and humanity, the thoroughness of her defeat, and her consequently larger loss of status both as a power and as a culture in comparison to the "upstart" United States. Unhappily—and inevitably—certain details of American policy in West Germany, especially in the first four postwar years, sometimes lent credence to the suspicion that the United States aimed to make over other countries in her own image. Quite a few occupation officials insisted that the regeneration of the Germans required a wholesale and literal copying of American civilization, especially in those aspects, often minor, in which they themselves happened to be experts. An American with the mission of democratizing the German press decreed that the make-up, layout, and contents of German newspapers were to be exactly like those in American newspapers; an education expert advised German students to address their teachers by their first names rather than as *Herr Professor;* a Military Government specialist decreed that separate municipal boards of health rather than the traditional health departments of the German police were to control public health matters. In these and many other such essentially unimportant cases, West Germans saw evidence of an American desire to create a "satellite," rather than the mere provinciality of administrators who conceived of democracy as a strict adherence to the patterns of their home towns. There were also all the Americans who continually scolded the Germans for their lack of democracy—seemingly unaware of the fact that democracy is learned only by doing; that the Germans have had little chance of practicing it, and that democracy is in any case no ready-to-wear export article. And the Germans, on their side, too often sharing the notion that democracy was to come to them as a gift from above, did not fail to blame the Americans for their own political shortcomings.

Actually, a deep fear of being swallowed up by cultures—and continents—thought to be younger, more primitive, and therefore more powerful than the old, and presumably weaker, culture of Europe also underlies the resistance to "Americanism." In a confidential article circulated by the most progressive element of German industry, we read: "The author has the impression that in Russia as well as in the United States a new civilization is emerging, and that both these civilizations have more in common with each other than with Western [*abendlaendisch*] civilization. Moscow and Washington are inwardly in very close proximity, and the difference between them lies fundamentally only in the means by which they realize themselves."

WHILE direct experiences of hoodlumism at the hands of the American occupation forces were few, there was hearsay and literature aplenty to testify to the "brutality" and "toughness" of Americans. The more overwhelming the massive evidence of Nazi crimes and brutality, the harder did many Germans try to believe that the crimes of other nations were "just as bad"; occasional American excesses became "atrocities," while at the same time it began to be fashionable in Germany to speak of Nazi atrocities as "excesses." The first anti-American book to win popularity in postwar Germany was the

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translation of a war novel published here in 1948: *The Crusaders* by Stefan Heym. Its main villains included a captain who considered rape and black market operations as among his privileges, a sadistic sergeant, and a selfish, hypocritical major who worked for Wall Street. Although Heym's book was also "anti-German," it became a postwar best-seller in West Germany. Norman Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead* was likewise successful in German translation as a documentation of American army "brutality" —and reinforced the stereotype of American brutishness and spiritual squalor.

Most impressive however, was the tremendous success of Ernst von Salomon's *The Questionnaire* in 1951, the first anti-American book by a German author. Von Salomon, a cynical and irresponsible adventurer-journalist who had been involved in the murder of Walter Rathenau and in other terroristic acts in the 1920's, describes, with a certain masochistic relish, the atrocities, stupidities, brutalities, and acts of corruption supposedly committed by Americans in the course of their conquest and occupation of Germany.

Stories about terror in the United States itself have also found believers in West Germany. Whenever I heard West Germans mention concentration camps in both America and Russia, I found them quoting such "non-Communist" sources as—in about that order—Simone de Beauvoir's American travelogue, reports of anti-Red "hysteria" and "witchhunts" sent by at least two New York correspondents of West German newspapers, and the "liberal" weeklies published in London and New York. The information agencies run in Germany by the U.S. Department of State are not much help. When this reporter visited Amerika-Haus, in Ulm last fall, the only periodicals on the open shelves of its library were the *Nation*, *The New Statesman and Nation*, and *Commonweal*—only the last of which applies the same standards both to the Soviet Union and the United States. Persistent inquiries revealed a back room where other American weeklies and monthlies were piled in stacks. Of the two show windows of Amerika-Haus in Ulm, one was devoted to an explanation of the rules of baseball; the other, to tobacco, with pictures of starved-looking tobacco workers, a German translation of Erskine Caldwell's *Tobacco Road*, and two outdated books on the history of tobacco.

THE intellectual soil for anti-American attitudes was well prepared by the Communist and leftist propaganda of the 1920's, when the Communists and their fellow-travelers were in control of large areas of Germany's intellectual life. They presented a United States dominated by monopoly capitalism and ridden by terror and poverty —the appropriate dark contrast to the glowing "Great Experiment" in Russia. The American books most widely read in Germany were those of Upton Sinclair, Michael Gold, and others, denouncing conditions in this country. Travel books on America by Communists or fellow-travelers like Egon Erwin Kisch, A. Hollitscher, and Maria Leitner, enjoyed wide circulation. During the Nazi era, the same notions about America continued to be circulated, but with Hitler's racial angle added to the attacks on "plutocracy." For many Germans born before 1920, these stereotypes were their first introduction to things American, and they continue to associate America with the Great Depression, Sacco and Vanzetti, and pre-Roosevelt union-baiting.

Fresh fuel is provided today by highly colored misinterpretations of Congressional investigations, the death sentences on Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, the deportations of foreign-born Communist leaders—all this, combined with wildly exaggerated and often lying rumors, to drive home the point that terror rules in America as well as in Soviet Russia, that dissent is persecuted in America too, and that both countries are equally cowed by the state, secret police, and informers, the only difference being that in America terror cloaks itself in hypocritical professions of allegiance to the cause of liberty.

What is striking about most of this anti-American prejudice is not the misinformation as such. I was even more struck by the speed with which, after I would point out factual absurdities, many West Germans switched to equally erroneous anti-American assertions that contradicted their first ones. Hardly had I finished telling the highly educated editor of a neutralist paper that all his talk about concentration camps in America like those in Russia was nonsense than he began attacking America for exactly the op-

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posite reason—that she permitted too much liberty. A country needed freedom—he said—as well as order, but while they had too much order in the Soviet Russia, they had too little of it in America, and this explains the social injustice, the sexual looseness, and *"die Pin-up-Kultur."*

A few days later, in another city, a friend took me to a group of intellectuals who had met to discuss which books they were to blacklist as Nazi literature. Many of the titles they named, among them some by American authors, could by no stretch of the imagination be called Nazi, and I tried to tell them how dangerous was such suppression of unpleasant ideas. They replied, agitatedly, "Your American freedom is the most dangerous of all; it only leads to new Hitlers!" A little later they praised two American novels that voiced protest against American social and political conditions—the kind of protests that are misunderstood abroad as "anti-American," and neither of which, in my opinion, was a noteworthy example of American writing. After pointing this out I was lectured, this time with some asperity, on the "anti-Communist hysteria in America" that went to the extreme of suppressing these "progressive" books. To my remark that one of these books, Norman Mailer's *Barbary Shore,* had not been suppressed, but simply disliked by critics, they replied that this went to show that book-reviewing, too, was unfree in America. As far as I know, there were no Communists at this meeting.

I told a Bavarian landowner, whose family castle has been haunted by the same ghost since the 18th century, about the expropriation and expulsion of East German landowners. He knew nothing about that, but told me angrily that the "same thing" had happened in his neck of the woods—the "Amis" had taken over a piece of land (after due payment to its owner) for a drilling ground. He lived close to the Iron Curtain, and I told him that it was to his own interest if the "Amis" were militarily prepared for invasion from the East. To which he replied that the "Amis" were sissies, much too soft-hearted and pacifistic to be able or willing to fight the Soviets and defend his property.

But while almost any prejudice can be backed up by odds and ends of distorted fact, and while the Soviet propagandists do their best to supply such fact, the deeper reason why many Germans believe what they do about America is that they *want* to. "Anti-Americanism" permits them to feel justified in rejecting or postponing the necessity and obligation to choose between East and West. If they can persuade themselves that America is as objectionable as Russia, they will be able to square their neutralism with their consciences.

Many West Germans expect more safety from a neutral attitude, and since it is the Americans who are pressing them to side with the West, it is America that they feel as more immediately threatening. For above all else, they fear another war. After Eisenhower had said in an election speech that "the American conscience can never know peace until those people [those "now suffering under the Russian pall"] are restored again to being masters of their fate," the whole press in West Germany fell into a panic. "This means that he wants war, that America plans to liberate the people behind the Iron Curtain," I was told by practically everybody I met in Munich and Frankfort during the following week. I tried to explain that what Eisenhower had said did not at all justify such an interpretation, and that there were only a few uninfluential Americans who wanted a war. But I found no credence. To the fearful German mind, America's "crusading spirit" spelled out an aggressive war against the Soviet world.*

But the same Germans, in the course of the very same conversations, almost always charged America with the diametrically opposite fault—the "Amis" would leave them in the lurch when Russia attacked. That the Americans should plan a "provocative" attack to liberate the peoples inside the Iron Curtain, and at the same time plan to retreat without defending the free peoples outside it, was of course completely irrational.

*In American usage, "crusade" can mean, among other things, "any remedial enterprise undertaken with zeal and enthusiasm," according to *Webster's Dictionary.* In German usage, *Kreuzzug* is exclusively identified with "the wars of the Occident to liberate the Holy Land, and against other infidels," according to Herder's *Volks-Lexikon.* Therefore, when Germans hear Americans speak of a "crusade," they see a *Kreuzzug,* "a holy war," of armed fanatics against the East.

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But it served as a rationalization for the desire to remain neutral and pursue one's own personal, local, and national interests without interference from and responsibility to the rest of the world.

Whereas many East Germans feel that they have little to lose and something to win by a war, most West Germans feel that they have little to win and everything to lose. If they take sides, they reason, the other side is sure to drop atom bombs on them—it makes little difference whose. Early in the Korean war, with West Germany close to panic, George N. Shuster, then the U. S. Land Commissioner for Bavaria, wisely told his listeners in a radio speech from Munich, that the first atom bomb was more likely to be dropped on New York than Munich. German friends told me next day they had heard Dr. Shuster say the first atom bombs would fall, not on New York, but on Munich!

These fearful West Germans also hope that if they remain neutral in a new war they will be *occupied*—not devastated—by the Russians and then liberated—not devastated—by the Americans. In sum, they grasp at the chance of surviving as neutrals that they mightn't have as partisans, whatever happened. "When the Russians come, they will take away four of my six cows," a shrewd peasant in an outlying Bavarian valley said, "but if war comes and we fight, all my cows will be killed, and myself in addition."

Added to this West German distrust about the aims of American leadership, whether in peace or war, is the feeling that the Americans have not yet learned the technique of leadership as a world power (most Germans, whether pro- or anti-British, did admire the British in this respect). American policy in Germany since 1945, they believe, has had no line of its own, acting merely in reflex to the Soviet line, reversing its own aims whenever the latter changed its aims. The West Germans forget that their present situation—for which the disastrous Nazi policy is largely responsible—would justify a great sense of insecurity no matter how expert those charged with protecting them against Russia. But with the irrationality of fear, they prefer to suppress their awareness of the reality of the Soviet threat and the necessity of measures of self-defense; instead, they blame America for insisting that they be aware of it, and stand reality on its head by finding it necessary to "defend" themselves against "American" threats.

REMEMBERING that the term "anti-Americanism" lumps together a great array of opinions and attitudes that vary strongly in depth and intensity, is it possible to arrive at any reliable breakdown of German public opinion in this respect? We can hazard a few judgments as to the most publicized sectors. The West German group that actually does hate America, except for the very few Communists, revolves in the main around the neo-Nazis, and altogether this group is today, apparently, quite small. The leaders of the neo-Nazis are uninhibited in their denunciations of America—"that country whose presidents think they are God and want to rule the world, and who don't care whether the rest of mankind croaks as long as they make their profits under humanitarian pretenses!" That is how Fritz Dorls, the leader of the now dissolved neo-Nazi SRP, spoke when I interviewed him. He claimed that it was Wall Street's secret agents who broke up the friendship and alliance between Hitler and Stalin in 1941. And Dorls, like his fellow neo-Nazis, dreams of a renewal of the alliance between "the German and the Russian national socialisms" in a solid totalitarian front against the West. Unlike the old-style Nazis, the new ones admire the Soviet Union outspokenly and accept the support of her agents.*

*Anti-Americanism of this kind is often reinforced by anti-Semitism in Germany. Henry Morgenthau, Jr., Robert M. Kempner, and other Jewish Americans who were identified with postwar policies of severity toward Germany are cited to show that these policies were motivated by the Jewish "thirst for revenge"; the fact that other American and British Jews strongly opposed these same policies is never mentioned. In an equally gratuitous way, "refugees," as distinct from "native Americans," are particularly singled out in complaints about the American treatment of Germany.

Since the Prague trials, Communist propaganda from East Germany, and its camouflaged West German outlets like the Munich weekly *Deutsche Woche*, have gone to great lengths to identify "Jewish bourgeois nationalists," "Zionists," and Jews in general, with "Wall Street," "American imperialism," and America in general. Adenauer is consistently denounced for having sold out to Israel on Wall Street's orders. At the same time America herself continues to be accused of anti-Semitism, official and otherwise.

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The other sectors of neutralist opinion differ in that, opposing American policy, they neither hate America nor prefer Russia. The only exception is perhaps the Reverend Dr. Martin Niemöller, who for personal as well as sectarian reasons has in the last years drifted into a qualified pro-Sovietism. On a visit to Moscow in 1952, he discovered the "religious soul" of Bolshevism and glowingly reported the same after his return. America, on the other hand, seems to him to be dominated by a sinister pro-Catholic, anti-German conspiracy. But Niemöller's anti-Americanism and pro-Sovietism divides him even from his own political friends at home.

A SIMILAR neutralism, more anti-American than anti-Soviet in complexion, prevails among a small group of Social Democrats and trade unionists whose dogmatic Marxism leads them to see America as the capitalist devil and Soviet Russia as merely an erring proletarian brother who may still return to the truly socialist fold. One of these Socialists—not without influence on the middle levels of his party, and with a personal animus against America, where he spent several years—explained to me that the plan for German divisions in the European Defense Community was dreamed up by American and German capitalists, who wanted to build a "civil-war army" as a safeguard against a social revolution by the "German working masses."

In contrast, the majority of the Social Democratic spokesmen and leaders, and an even greater majority of their rank-and-filers, although sharing the isolationist, anti-militarist, neutralist mood of West Germany, at the same time oppose and reject Soviet Russia with strength and sincerity. Their dislike and distrust of America are much less militant, and in a great many cases almost nonexistent. I heard anti-American tirades from only two Socialist leaders, but suspicions and insinuations from quite a few. These last, however, wanted to justify an attitude of neutralism that was originally motivated by political expediency more than anything else; for the sake of election strategy, they had to be in total opposition to Adenauer's government, and because Adenauer was identified with pro-Americanism, they had to be anti-American. This was part of their "left nationalism," which has been a novel but widespread postwar manifestation in the German as well as in other European Socialist parties.

Anti-Americanism also obtains among the rightist parties—especially in the right wing of the Free Democratic party, and in the Deutsche, or German, party—but it is to some extent checked by the fact that these parties are part of the ruling coalition, whose strongest component is pro-American. On the whole, the attitude of the German political right is compounded of the cultural arrogance of the European upper classes in general and a peculiarly German national superciliousness that is voiced most articulately, though by no means exclusively, by spokesmen of the educated middle classes.

Anti-Americanism and most of its arguments and rationalizations are, however, not the monopoly of any one class in German society—just as adherence no less than opposition to Nazism could not be identified with any one social class (Marxist stereotypes to the contrary notwithstanding). Anti-Americanism, as an increasing mood and sentiment, permeates all social classes and all parties, in West Germany.

ARE there West Germans that can be considered—and who consider themselves—to be friends of America? Who are they? On the political plane, there is mainly Chancellor Konrad Adenauer, who is leading his country, quite autocratically to be sure, toward integration with the West and effective defense against the East, and away from nationalism in the isolationist-neutralist as well as in other senses. There are also a small minority of Social Democrats without much influence inside their party, yet whose voices carry strong moral and ideological weight with the public at large. Outstanding in this group are the mayors of the three cities of Berlin, Hamburg, and Bremen—Ernst Reuter, Max Brauer, and Wilhelm Kaisen. The pro-American wing of the German Federation of Labor is considerably stronger than its Social Democratic counterpart, and held the reins of that organization up to the fall of 1952, when it was overthrown by a slight majority in favor of the regular Socialist party line. A sizable number of politically unaffiliated Germans—many of them intellectuals and one-time visitors to America through the American government-sponsored

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Exchange Program—must also be counted among the "anti-anti-Americans."

Anti-Americanism in print is to be found only rarely in serious publications of any real intellectual level. It is more frequent, however, in a certain part of the daily press, which plays it up "to sell papers" competitively against the newspapers that were licensed by the Allied powers and remain strongly pro-American. Where anti-Americanism abounds most of all in print is in several of the weekly illustrated magazines that cater to a public of lower educational standards, and in farmers' publications.

How can an effective fight be made against anti-Americanism? First and foremost, such a fight must be waged by the Germans themselves, as by the other European peoples afflicted with it. Only through a conscious process of soul-searching and self-reeducation can the Germans overcome the fears, resentments, and difficulties from which their prejudices and suspicions stem. They must, as Mayor Reuter told this writer, understand that America's new power, and their own weakness, result from their own errors—errors that brought war and totalitarianism, and with which America had little to do. Only if they first overcome the habits of thought which led to such errors, Reuter has repeatedly said, can they find new and satisfactory ways of living with one another as well as with America. "Unfortunately, one cannot say that the European peoples have made serious progress in this effort," was Reuter's conclusion. This was at the end of 1952.

But there remain substantial areas in which America herself can contribute to a weakening of the sentiment against her and to the siphoning off of its more explosive ingredients. This is a main objective of that much abused "war of ideas" which in this country has been often, and is still, misinterpreted to be nothing more than a "war of words" or "ideological warfare," that is, a contest of efficient propaganda techniques. In my eyes, this misunderstanding is tragic. The key is not here but in the genuine interchange of ideas through discussion and education—mere advertising and propaganda techniques are no substitute, indeed worsen the situation—and, infinitely more important, in sound, definite *action*, mutually understood and entered into by the West Germans and the Western peoples.

Shrewd, Moscow-trained Edward Schulz, who up to 1951 was second in command of the East German Communist propaganda organization, told me that he and his former colleagues felt that "American propaganda was not at all bad, and often quite excellent." Nevertheless, he said, the Communists were not afraid of it because it was not backed up by corresponding action. "The Leninist insight," as he put it, of the unity of propaganda and action has not been understood by the democracies, and this has caused their propaganda to fail.

That "actions speak louder than words," this truism is indeed much ignored on our side of the "war of ideas." Ideas have to be brought to life in action before they can be advanced in propaganda, which can only *advertise* our policy, our purpose, our cause, not *of itself* counterattack, challenge, and refute anti-American Soviet propaganda, much less win the West German people over to our side. It is *policy in practice*, an implemented program, that will decide whether in time to come West Germany will join with us, or stand aside in sulking hostility in a neutralist limbo.

Even granting that the "words" from America's many propaganda organs were always honest, truthful, intelligent, and clear (which they by no means always are—but that's a different story), it still remains true that they have often been contradicted—sometimes only by isolated acts, but of a kind whose dramatic character allows them to become symbols—by the American program in action, and thus deprived of their power to persuade.

Every week several thousand refugees arrive in West Berlin from the East. At least a majority of them had good reason to fear for their lives or liberty under the Soviets; a smaller number had to flee because they had actively fought against the Russians. Whether they are housed inside or outside refugee camps, most of them are left to vegetate in incredibly miserable conditions. America acts in accordance with the asumption that "refugees are the sole responsibility of the Germans." Whatever our propaganda to the contrary, are not West Germans likely to conclude from this that

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America has no interest in the victims of slavery, believing only in liberation through war? When America chooses to cooperate with, and support, shady, self-seeking adventurers—for instance, in the case of the neo-Nazi hoodlums in the League of German Youth, who were trained in commando techniques—while abandoning independent, courageous, impoverished friends of freedom and of America to their own devices, she acts only to undermine her propaganda.

Another cause of friction, minor but not altogether irrelevant, is the present American image of Germany. Understanding works both ways, and it is not helped when influential American newspapers continue to show an undiscriminating hostility to things German by the selection, slanting, and editorial interpretation of German news. Their distrust, however much warranted by the past, is nevertheless often arbitrary, and unsubstantiated by the facts of the present. And among Germans it has reinforced the impression that America does not judge them on their own merits, and still looks upon them more as enemies than allies; which makes it all the harder for America's real friends in Germany to speak out and win supporters, while it enables the anti-Americans, who are almost always anti-democratic, to back up their arguments by saying, "See, the Americans still reject us in toto, have no faith in us, no matter what we do!"

In the final analysis, anti-Americanism in West Germany will wane only when the West Germans themselves begin to feel really secure, both domestically and internationally. But the first step toward this, must be taken by themselves; only then can others help them. It is for the Germans themselves to learn the habits of self-criticism and self-reliance that go with a democratic community; and they must face up to and act on the realities and responsibilities of their situation instead of trying to find scapegoats to relieve them of the burden of choice and decision. If the West Germans are to be in the position to determine their own fate, it will be only as free citizens conscious of the values and aims they share with the West, and ready of their own will to defend these to the last ditch if it becomes necessary. Such values and aims are not compatible with militarism and hyper-nationalism, and cannot be defended by *them*—nor by "providential" leaders with mandates empowering them exclusively to do the political thinking and deciding for a whole nation. Just as little can they be defended by isolationist neutralism.

As long as the great majority of West Germans remain as atomized and unpolitical as they were in 1945—which, unhappily they still do—they cannot attain even the beginnings of the security they yearn for. Until they begin to think politically they will not become aware of the real interests that bind them to the West, and to America—common interests upon which their security, as much as the West's, depends. It is these *Unpolitische,* "unpoliticals," who continue, as before, to present the most serious obstacle to the rebirth of Germany as a healthy community. They are people who "just don't care" about the common weal—or at least not enough to be willing to do something or sacrifice something for it. Much as they might dislike or fear certain eventualities, national no less than international, the *Unpolitische* will not take steps of their own accord to avert or oppose them; rather, they accept them passively and resign themselves—and, afterwards, find somebody else to blame. The big question is whether those West Germans who are genuinely anti-totalitarian and consciously pro-Western—the minority of free citizens—will be strong enough to carry the unpolitical majority with them in the future. In this writer's opinion, there is still a chance that they will.

But if that chance is to be taken advantage of, it would be well if we in the West were at this juncture to make a special effort, by word and deed, to get through to the Germans, and to the other peoples of Europe, just how much in common we have to lose —and to win.

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WHAT MANNER OF MAN WAS HITLER?

Messiah of the Ice Age

FRANCIS GOLFFING

THE study of people's attitudes to Hitler before he came to power and, in some degree, during the early days of his regime, is a study in misconceptions. Almost everybody has sinned here, certainly almost every intellectual in and out of Germany. The most we can hope for is to be wiser after the event, and two recent volumes* afford an excellent opportunity. They explode the notion, still current and plausibly enforced by our reading of *Mein Kampf*, that the man was at best a semi-literate fool—though endowed in some mysterious way with incredible will power, at once the agent and the slave of a sinister *idée fixe*. Nothing could be further from the truth. What looked like doltishness was at bottom mere boorishness, anchored in temperament, carefully exploited for purposes of prestige and propaganda, overindulged on occasion—especially in the field—but capable of correction and actually corrected at every turn. This implies what becomes quite clear in these pages: Hitler had manners when he wanted to, and even a certain kind of charm—by no means effective with women only, as misogynists are fond of claiming. But both the charm and the manners were turned off and on at will; he was emphatically not a gentleman.

I REMEMBER discussing the Nazi movement with British friends in 1938. The prevailing sense was one of *malaise* rather than fear. The Nazis were people, with Hitler their avatar, whom one must not touch at any price; not because they were poisonous but because they were unclean, they didn't "feel right": toads not vipers. This leads on to a different legend, as widespread as that of Hitler the dolt: Hitler the bluff. I do not mean to deny that Hitler was an expert at bluffing, especially during the time he was busy building up his military machine, but even at that time of most furious barking there was considerable force to his bite.

Nor did Hitler lack intelligence, or talent, or knowledge of sorts. That he had the first, few will deny—though I have heard it denied by quibblers who would grant him at most what the Germans call *Bauernschlauheit* (peasant cunning), or else a diabolical kind of cleverness. All this is nonsense, semantic subtlety misapplied to vindicate the blindness of one's own intelligence in not spotting accurately, and in time, somebody else's. Hitler was certainly intelligent, and by ordinary standards; he had more than average gifts of abstraction, generalization, inference; he was

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WHAT manner of man Haman or Pharaoh or Ghengis Khan was, we shall never know, but we would seem at least to have the chance to understand Hitler before that dreadful figure passes over the horizon into history and myth. In the considered opinion of the editors, this essay on the personality of Hitler, his motivation and his aims, is one of the most original, penetrating contributions to the subject they have yet seen. This is FRANCIS GOLFFING'S first full-length appearance in COMMENTARY, to which he has already contributed many translations (from the German and French) and, more lately, a number of incisive reviews of various books of apologia by ex-Nazis. Mr. Golffing was born in Vienna in 1910, studied at the universities of Berlin, Heidelberg, Goettingen, Freiburg, Basel, Grenoble, and holds a Ph.D. in literature and philosophy. He is now professor of English at Bennington College and director of the Cummington (summer) School of the Arts. A book of his poems was published by the Cummington Press in 1949, and his verse and prose have also appeared in *Sewanee Review*, *Accent*, *Poetry*, *Quarterly Review of Literature*, and other magazines.

**Hitler Directs His War*, by Felix Gilbert (Oxford), and *Hitlers Tischgespraeche*, edited by Henry Picker (Athenaeum-Verlag, Berlin).

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alert to particular events; he had a remarkable knowledge of people—"his" people and, alas, some that were not his—and he succeeded within limits in adjusting his actions to his insights.

Hitler had normal traits, but these were balanced by others decidedly pathological; besides, his personality was so completely involved with his role as party leader and dictator that what might have been tractable in the individual became wholly refractory and opaque once that individual was merged with his *persona*. At the same time, this merger must not blind us to the fact that there was an individual to start with and that his mind was well, and not at all oddly, endowed.

By turning to Hitler's knowledge, we do indeed cross the line into oddity. But, once more, the issue has on the whole been presented too simply. His learning, such as it is, shows every trace of being self-taught, shy of discipline, out and out eclectic. It is also remarkably muddled—though not quite so muddled as the reader who uses *Mein Kampf* as his sole source might infer, for there the confusion (via simplification) has been pushed to an extreme for propagandistic reasons. But what is interesting—and somewhat surprising—is how little of that knowledge was adventitious, appropriated at random. Surprising, considering another legend: Hitler's extreme impressionableness in intellectual matters and his reliance for any kind of speculative thought on men like Goebbels and Rosenberg.

Granted that what he has to say on cultural and philosophical topics is so much tinsel and trumpery, the tinsel and trumpery are hard won, spun out of his own bowels, genuine. The dogged autodidact who during his adolescence devoured scrap after scrap of high thought—Marx, Nietzsche, Gobineau, and God knows how much besides—to distill his own political doctrine and to achieve, by an endless series of refutations and corroborations of other men's ideas, an expedient self-definition—this unsavory latter-day Faust knew what he was doing and when put on the spot had his answer ready: "Give me a chance and I'll prove to you that it works." A hard core of pragmatism distinguishes Hitler's type of mind quite sharply from that of a Rosenberg or a Goebbels: muddleheads both of them, given to abstruse ravings, though it may be claimed that the latter at least had a queer sensibility which made him respond to certain aesthetic refinements.

In any event, there is ample evidence to show that Hitler had nothing to learn from the debauched university wits in the Nazi party; that by 1930 or thereabouts he had absorbed all the learning he needed or would need, except in matters of strategy and technology; that he was not only the ruling personality but also the ruling intellect of his coterie—always ready to pontificate, impatient of contradiction, long-winded, histrionic to a degree. The authors of both *Hitler Directs His War* and *Hitlers Tischgespraeche* agree in their delineations of the "Fuehrer's" manner; and it is pretty much the picture we expected to get. His interests and preoccupations, on the other hand, present us with all kinds of surprises.

THE volume *Hitler Directs His War* offers a selection from the stenographic transcripts of his daily military conferences held between December 1942 and March 1945—a fair span over which to gauge the effect the vicissitudes of war had on Hitler and his associates at headquarters. In Dr. Gilbert's preface, certain of Hitler's well-known characteristics are made to stand out in sharp relief: his extreme moodiness, his distaste for loud voices, his incredulity or impatience whenever things happened to take a turn for the worse, and a corresponding eagerness to seize on cheerful incidents, however trivial. Gilbert strongly stresses the "substratum of tension" between Hitler and most of the professional officers—Rommel being the great exception—and verifies, in the field of military affairs, his great combinatorial skill which, though far from infallible, cannot be reduced to, or confounded with, those famous occasional "hunches"; also his remarkable skill in argument.

Among many recurrent motifs in this book there are two that deserve special con-

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sideration: Hitler's attitude towards the army leaders, and by implication towards the upper strata of society (German as well as foreign), and his attitude towards death.

In view of his origins and upbringing, on the one hand, and the caste system of the German army on the other, Hitler's military status during the First World War was quite naturally that of a common soldier. Short of being commissioned in the field, there was no chance for a man like him to make a career in the army and it so happened that he didn't. His feelings in this matter seem to have been mixed. His lower-middle-class defiance of the upper bourgeoisie and aristocracy inclined him toward an acceptance of his status; he showed signs both of pride and of what Nietzsche calls *ressentiment*—the deep-seated envy and distrust the plebeian feels towards the well-bred, insouciant, gay (or those who seem so). During his formative years Hitler doubtless identified his privileged "betters" with the members of the cadet and officer corps—sons, all of them, of genteel parents, moving in an aura that for the Private First-Class must have held all sorts of pleasant associations: the casino, *Sekt*, lights of love, and most pleasant of all, lack of internal pressures, an easy conscience. This ambivalence towards the upper class—especially upper-class army men—never left Hitler, even though the Nazis later gained a good number of adherents from the aristocracy and in its turn the army came to be stocked with Nazi officers, not to mention the large SS outfits whose status was equal, and in some cases superior, to the Wehrmacht's.

CLEARLY it was not all a matter of status—whose status could compare with Hitler's?—but of breeding and *savoir vivre*. Though he carried himself very well in his dealings with diplomats and old-school generals (was indeed in some respects their superior and often genuinely deferred to), it becomes apparent on reading these minutes that, somehow, he just couldn't quite "see" the social elite—except when in brown shirts, indistinguishable from the rest, they paraded past him, or when in one of the vast auditoriums, after he had finshed a speech, they rose thundering to their feet to salute him. Here was one of the few differentiae that this great differentia-hater (this, or "leveler," seems to me a more accurate term for Hitler than Gilbert's "great simplifier") found unmanageable to the end. Unlike the workers, and to some extent the intellectuals, the upper strata—the land-owning gentry, the military, the industrial magnates—could not be completely bullied into submission, shot through though they were with cowardice, sycophancy, complaisance. Being heterogeneous as a class, they remained elusive.

Hitler Directs His War contains a curious passage which is directly pertinent to this question. It occurs in the conference of January 27, 1945. Hitler, Goering, Guderian, Burgdorf, and others are present. After a lengthy discussion of the situation in Alsace and general questions of command in the West, a memorandum by General Burgdorf concerning the newly created Volkssturm (and by implication the army as a whole) is brought in. The document broaches the possibility of demoting officers without prejudice, because of local exigencies. Goering is strongly opposed, the issue being, of course, "honor." The traditional associations of demotion are entirely punitive; if you demote a general because the job he is doing calls only for a major, something will happen to his morale; so that in the long run the army is bound to be the loser. Goering's alternative sounds simple enough: let the man keep his old rank and make him do the inferior job. This, though not pleasant either, will hurt less. His main opponent is Burgdorf, who in a polite way makes light of these scruples, while pointing out the difficulties that arise when you overstaff your army with high-ranking officers. He does not see any harm in a former colonel's re-entering the service as a common soldier; all that matters is whether the individual is efficient in his job.

Hitler says relatively little but his comments are revealing: they betray the most acute discomfort. He starts by maintaining

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that "the rank should be connected with the job": the orthodox, static conception one would expect from a mind thinking in simple correlations between status and function. But evidently there is a third factor: personal ability, initiative, and this Hitler finds unsettling. Burgdorf quite blandly puts his finger on the source of Hitler's confusion. "The moment," he says, "the Fuehrer adopted the policy of promoting men according to their ability instead of their seniority, the logical thing would have been to demote those people who did not have the ability for the rank they were holding." Hitler replies with a long harangue about the difficulties he is facing in trying to build a new army without utterly wrecking the old structure—until finally he gets around to his experiences in World War I. "People weren't promoted at all in the First World War. That was the worst promotion system that ever existed." But there is no reasonable system that can be put in its place, at least while the emergency lasts.

The gulf between Goering's rank-consciousness and Burgdorf's cool common sense widens steadily, with Hitler neutralized between the two: what is *he* to say, after all, when the best professionals disagree? And the "Fuehrer" throws fond glances at his own party hierarchy, where things can be handled rather smoothly, where the three-way relation of rank, ability, function is a matter of course and where the pyramid tapers to a simple apex. As so often in reading Hitler's wartime statements, one gets here a strong sense of regret on his part: regret that the party was not powerful enough to fight this war unaided—and unhampered—by the military. After all, the total state provided for one system only; the distinction between civilian and soldier being theoretically abolished, there seemed to be no reason why a special body of men should be needed to wage wars—a body, moreover, composed of such arrogant and refractory members. Hitler's own hierarchy was built to exclude any other; it claimed the whole stage: but behind the wings stood the dialectic spirit of history, laughing.

THIS is how Mr. Gilbert describes Hitler's office in the Chancellery: "[His] study was a hall rather than a room. The long wall opposite the door of the antechamber was broken by a large number of tall but narrow windows, and by a glass door leading into the garden of the Chancellery. Along the two side walls on the right and left a few tables with heavy leather-upholstered chairs were placed, but in comparison to its large size the furniture was sparse. The whole area was dominated by a writing desk and chair, heavy pieces of furniture which stood near the middle of the wall opening on the garden."

The furniture of Hitler's mind is reflected in his favorite physical décor: sparseness, with heavy, solid objects to relieve the emptiness here and there; the same disposition indoors that made him delight in massive installations, whether for military or extermination purposes, dotting a vast tract of charred, uninhabited land.

While his movements through these physical embodiments seem to have been easy enough, Hitler traversed the unprepossessing landscapes of his mind in the attitude of both victor and victim, with propitiatory hands raised to humor the hostile Fates. Along with his boundless belief in himself as the agent of Providence, chosen to establish an earthly paradise for his people, we find in numerous statements not designed for public consumption a deep hatred of mankind, and an arch-Protestant conviction of man's fallen state. Hitler's destructive cynicism was early noted, but it has not been sufficiently stressed that, quite plainly and from the very start, it covered all of mankind, including, as happens in every case of true nihilism, himself.

That Hitler considered himself by no means transcendently charmed, exempt from the general blight, that he felt "set apart" in a different and much more special sense only, is a fact constantly borne in upon the reader of these pages—provided he attends as much to the tone of the statements as to their overt content. For no matter how private and informal these talks, Hitler could

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not very well afford—even had he so desired—to indulge Ecclesiastes-like sentiments in front of his generals. So while he brings in the Fatherland, the life of the nation, and similar tags to temper any outburst of radical pessimism, he does it lamely, almost as an afterthought. The true emphasis lies elsewhere.

Here is an example, shortly after the news of Stalingrad had reached headquarters: "The individual must die anyway. Beyond the life of the individual is the Nation. But how anyone could be afraid of this moment of death, with which he can free himself from this misery, if his duty doesn't chain him to this Vale of Tears. *Na!*" But for the style and the patriotic reference this might have come from a Calvinist preacher. And again, after the attempt on his life in July 1944: "It [death] is only a fraction of a second, and then one is freed from everything, and has one's quiet and eternal peace." The same sentiment, with stronger connotations, here, of Buddhism via Schopenhauer. The destination is heaven—or Nirvana—not the Third Reich in perpetuity. Whenever the shock of the situation becomes strong enough—as, also, in his reaction to Mussolini's fall—to move this callous man, similar feelings emerge. And certainly what holds true for him would hold *a fortiori* for his minions: the death-wish, faced rarely and with reluctance, must be universal.

To counter this powerful impulse Hitler had to devise a complex apparatus of affirmations and ritual observances. Unhappiness such as his could only be staunched by constantly appeasing the infernal forces, by giving them what he considered their due. Through the infliction of misery unequaled in any age he might ease his own misery—temporarily. Hence the appalling succession of blood sacrifices and burnt offerings, mitigated and possibly justified in his own eyes by what his disciples admired most in the man: his personal asceticism, the clean code of the monk. Whether or not the tales of his frugality and sexual abstemiousness are true, they are thoroughly plausible; and it is as absurd to dismiss such conduct as a mere "front" as it is shallow to see in it nothing but a Spartan regimen necessitated by the magnitude of his job.

Hitler liked to boast of his hypnotic powers—there is a bantering reference to them in these minutes: "I have to hypnotize Quisling today"—but he was scarcely hypnotized by his own power, nor could he hypnotize his growing discomfort into oblivion. Putting millions to sleep was no effective relief for insomnia. And strong as his evil eye must have been, it did not prevail against the Medusa stare that would freeze him. Lacking Perseus' shield, this spurious "savior" was cast for the role of victim: transformed, at last, into his own monument.

IN APPROACHING Hitler's *Tischgespraeche* ("table talk") it is well to put by all conventional notions of good—i.e. pithy, profound, witty—talk; also the notion that a social, dialogue element (whether implied or overt) is of the essence of such "compositions." There is no give and take in these pages; the interlocutors are not simply muted, to be sketched in by the reader, but fundamentally nonexistent. As always, Hitler addresses the void—or himself, which, in any social sense, comes to the same thing.

The book *Hitlers Tischgespraeche*—sponsored by a new institute in Germany purportedly devoted to an objective examination of the record of National Socialism—contains Hitler's mealtime conversations, or at least their salient passages, while at his headquarters in East Prussia or the Ukraine, or on his private train. The time covered is from July 1941 to August 1942. His fellow diners were, in roughly equal proportion, Wehrmacht officers and high party officials.

A man like Hitler is exempt from literary standards, including those of good speech; were he not, these soliloquies would be judged atrocious—callow in thought and extremely clumsy in style. Yet we read them not for their intrinsic value, but for the light they shed on his mind; and that light, while not blinding, affords more illu-

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mination than we had any reason to hope for.

With the Enlightenment starts the open rebellion of Western man against nature. No longer the beneficent Earth Mother, in whose giant lap men take strenuous walks and relax, she comes to be seen as an alien force, fully as sinister as ourselves and a great deal less calculable—despite every triumph of science and technology. Henceforth two major attitudes will characterize man's dealings with nature: a wish for extinction through submission (Wagner, Schopenhauer, the whole Romantic movement in literature), which is the organic solution; a wish for extinction through dominance, which is the technological or technocratic solution, codified by Spengler, and whose pet contemporary tokens are the robot, the jet plane, the atom bomb. Hitler is unable to decide which of these two modes of suicide he ought to preach and practice.

To be sure, he makes a show of choosing, and quite early in life. The result is a doctrine, crazy, but with every appearance of being solidly forged; acted out, moreover, with great determination, that is to say with no trace of hypocrisy, no evidence of scruples or flagging power of will. There can be no doubt: Hitler has plumped for the technocratic alternative, cleverly camouflaged as *Lebensraum,* supremacy of the Aryan race; at times lifting the camouflage and singing, quite frankly, the praises of scientist and engineer as the true rulers of our age—though by preference these should be Germans and racially pure. As for nature, it will be subjugated at any cost; repressed and finally erased in the individual, who, phoenix-wise, will emerge as the robot. The resources of the land will be mobilized, much as the resources of a nation at war, with geophysicists and geopoliticians surveying the whole globe the way an army doctor might scan each recruit for *Dienst-tauglichkeit.* Quite clearly, Hitler has made up his mind.

Yet it may be doubted that he ever did. Not only because of the elements in his agrarian program which point the other way—these might be dismissed as "eyewash," as a sop thrown to the farmers, though there is much genuine romanticism in Darré, in the whole "blood and soil" cult, however depraved and perverted. But what is decisive are Hitler's own statements—the ones not published for show—which prove him to be a very divided man indeed. He quite plainly operated with a double standard and was ready to enforce that standard in all its duplicity.

In peacetime the virtues of peace are in order; and peace here really refers to the elemental peace of nature: rustling of oak leaves, the pastoral hearth, the study of runes, summer-solstice festivals, and the rest. This peace also, and in another mode, means death; extinction of self, return to the Great Mother. But as long as there is no peace we must court life—or death—the militant way: through planned construction and destruction, an army the like of which has never been seen, a populace whose coefficient of technical skill will make even the Americans blush. Both programs lay constantly in Hitler's mind, perhaps not clearly distinguished but sufficiently separate to cause him discomfort. Being the man he was, he went ahead with either, resolute, scornful of compromise. Yet something happened to him during the process. The more we read about Hitler, and by him, the more our bull in the china shop comes to resemble the dumb ox trotting to slaughter—though traits of the bull, or bully, persist to the very end.

As Hitler grows older, his confessions of disturbed balance increase in frequency: the night-self has definitely gained the upper hand. (In his later years Hitler would never go to bed before four or five in the morning, or rise before noon.) His night-self discloses him as romantic artist—in sad disrepair, to be sure. ("Among various points mentioned by Herr Hitler were, that he was by nature an artist, not a politician, and that once the Polish question was set-

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tled, he would end his life as an artist and not as a warmonger"—Sir Nevile Henderson, August 1939.) The line takes us back to Richard Wagner, Kleist, the painter Caspar David Friedrich, the "pan-psychist" philosopher Schubert, who wrote a book on the "night-side" of creation. There is much reveling in death and destruction, the hardest way to secure the softest end; a mounting attraction for the "depths" that claim the somnambulist drugged with sleep.

In a less pathic way, Hitler had managed to maintain the illusion of peace during the early years of his regime: Speer and others have told about his delight in painting, architecture, movies, as well as in scenery. Those were the original anodynes to induce that "inner calm and assurance necessary to his world-shattering decisions" (Speer). That all anodynes are in essence narcotic, death-dealing, is a fact which Hitler apparently never acknowledged, either physically or mentally. His day-self rationalized nature into the mere pleasance, or tonic avocation, it proverbially is for the "hard-working businessman." In any case, with the advent of war these satisfactions ceased, never to be recovered.

From 1939 on, all Hitler's statements are fed by an ambiguous source. The common measure, and highest value in life, is still glory; but how curious its trappings. Philosophically, the paradox is simple enough. None but the perennial, Valhalla fighter deserves peace; war is glory and so is peace—as a "limit." Since the limit can never be reached, all the glory is war's. But Hitler had to deny, even to his intimates, that the goal was chimerical; and this introduces a plangent millennial note into his discourse, reminiscent, at times, of utopian socialism, in which paradise remains permanently the day after tomorrow.

Had the recipients of Hitler's wisdom at headquarters had any inkling that his millennial Reich was nothing but a perversion of an old socialist dream, they would have felt even more uncomfortable than they did, listening to the gospel of "true," i.e. *national*, socialism. Reactionary as it was, that gospel contained hints of a classless society, of economic redistribution, which could not please them very much. They would have preferred a doctrine of straight nihilism—its active variety, of course—to these disturbing imaginative vistas. But his long experience in addressing party rallies had taught Hitler one thing: in order to make that all-out effort, that surrender of self expected of him, the ordinary citizen required a positive goal commensurate with the greatness of his sacrifice.

It is true that things had changed, and that the men he was now addressing were neither civilians nor ordinary citizens; but he could not scrap that whole well-rehearsed program merely to suit them. News of his double standard might leak out and destroy the morale of the nation at large. Or perhaps—who can tell?—his mind was simply no longer able to stand the strain of a double standard, of thinking in two sets of terms at once: there are definite signs here of automatism, of an irrational compulsion that would bring the same old slogans to his lips, regardless of the occasion. Yet there is the equivocal ring, too; and that ring makes itself heard the more insistently, the plainer, the more single-minded the "message" becomes.

BEFORE we turn to the message, let us look at the discourse. It swings back and forth between exhortation to action and the faked millennial superstructure—the *Germanische Grossreich deutscher Nation;* covering, as it swings, a remarkable range of topics. Many of these seem casual, unrelated to the major concerns. Hitler holds forth on such matters as smoking, drinking, women's dresses, the theater, the miserable plight of professional dancers. He shows himself genial, relaxed, plainly enjoying the speechless admiration of his acolytes as they watch their redoubtable Leader in the role of solicitous benevolent despot. And given his sorry premises, much of what he says sounds thoroughly plausible.

But the plainer the message, the greater its ambiguity. Since Hitler's doctrine was a

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compound, his most direct statement of it exhibited most sharply its several features, and so its stresses and tensions. Nature, though rarely mentioned by name, looms large in the compound; and nature, by straining against society, pulls society in; society pulls in both war and peace; war and peace pull in fate, and so on. Yet all these disparate notions are used as if they were near-synonyms; which makes it easy to reduce them to a key notion, called by Hitler himself the "primordial rhythm" (*Rhythmus der Vorwelt*). Everything stems from this rhythm, present as well as future; it pervades every field of heroic action, whether that "action" be *Parsifal*, a brown-shirt rally, or the resettlement of Russia by German elite farmers. The rhythm itself is neutral; some of its manifestations have wholly positive associations, while others can be variously manipulated—e.g. war, peace, nature.

But whenever Hitler speaks of nature, desperation is apt to shine through—to be immediately canceled, or transcended, by a rhetorical flourish. "We might find it horrible to watch how in nature one thing preys on the next. The fly is killed by the dragon-fly; the dragon-fly by a bird; that bird by a larger bird. Once it grows old, the biggest thing falls prey to bacteria; which in their turn, and by a different method, are destroyed too. If we possessed means of magnifying things by several millions, we might succeed in discovering new worlds. . . . One thing is certain: all this cannot be changed. Suppose you take your own life: it returns to nature as matter, mind, spirit. The toad doesn't know what it was before it existed, and we know as little as the toad. The thing to do, then, is to explore the laws of nature, so as not to oppose them: to ignore these laws is like challenging the firmament. If I believe in any divine commandment at all, it is this and no other: preserve the species!"

As it happens, what stays in the mind after reading this passage is the gloom, not the flourish. Gloom arises from brooding, fixation; from the slow complex of the past moving in on us rather than from our nervous forward glances. Provide as he might against the future, the realm Hitler most dreaded—and relished—was the past; and his favorite past, the one he found truly engrossing, was that of myth and pre-history rather than any historical period.*

Not only did the primeval appeal to the artist in him but it also formed a grand repository of "lessons"; awful, solemn, salutary lessons. Quite a few of these speculations turn on the Stone Age, the Ice Age, Hörbiger's *Welteislehre*. And Hitler, so crude and peremptory when dealing with the present and future, with history even, now suddenly warms to his subject: he explores and conjectures, begins to show the bare rudiments of scientific interest and method. But the potent attraction is matched by an equally keen *malaise*. That world of fossils, stone ages, glacial deposits, cave dwellings—all those dead, disjunct, mysterious things—is bound to absorb to itself in the end his own carefully planned, "enlightened" world of brand new weapons, buildings, auto highways, and his schemes, yet vaster and shinier, for the future.

HITLER'S frantic search for improvements in every technical field is simply a token of his abject dread: dread of the past reclaiming its own, taking the life out of things by spoiling their function. "There can be no doubt: after a certain time every installation falls into disuse. Once the daily routine settles down on things, they become meaningless, full of cracks, dross, rust, etc." There is only one way in which we can ward off this fateful deterioration: by never allowing the normal routine to settle; declaring, instead, a permanent state of emergency. Emergency made constant may then perhaps breed its own "true" permanence: a childish paradox, and one in which Hitler

*It is interesting to compare in this sense Hitler's various statements about the great leaders of the past: the further removed they are from the present, the greater his admiration. Napoleon seems bigger than Bismarck, Caesar than Napoleon, Alexander than Caesar—a simple scaling "up" down the alley of history.

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never believed. But nature had failed him; there was now no anodyne left but technology; and when in pain a man will readily reach for a drug he is sure won't work. Besides, being a doctor as well as a patient, Hitler could always try it on others. As it happened, the anodyne worked exceedingly well with his lieutenants and with the ruck of the populace. Cold as ice—*eiskalt* was one of his pet terms—he watched the absurd spectacle of people building on the edge of the void; dropping an occasional word of warning—or was it meant as encouragement?—from tight lips. "In this too I am *eiskalt*: if the German nation is unwilling to fight for its preservation—well then: let it disappear from the globe." A curious sentiment, this, coming from a man usually described as a passionate "racist."

Those large eyes, steel-blue, which used to transfix people, freezing skeptics into awed submission—those were not the eyes of a prophet beholding the land which his people, unable to share his vision, shall finally enter—though he, the seer, may not. They were the numbed eyes of a man dead long since; who had risen from Cimmerian darkness—Hörbiger's *Welteiszeit*—to travel across the ages in search of a sun sufficiently strong to melt his armor of ice. He found his space, his time, but all he could do once he found them was to pass his frost on to others. We learn from this book that Hitler's heart went out to Greece and Rome, and every grace of the South; that he hated the dank, frigid North; that he felt thorough contempt for the Nordic myth his comrade Rosenberg had concocted for his use.

That he loved and admired Wagner, looking on him as a kindred spirit, his brother—this, on the face of it, will seem a contradiction. But since Wagner's plight was essentially that of Hitler—an icy man, he too, who made his associates shiver—why should not the "Fuehrer" have felt a sense of kinship? If someone glories in fire magic and fiery assumptions, it may be safely alleged that he is suffering, not from excess of heat but from excess of cold—a cold, moreover, for which there is no remedy in the real world. What drew Hitler to Wagner was not a common passion or exaltation—*furor Teutonicus*—but a common dearth. Nor can Hitler's funeral pyre be read as the climax of all his strenuous aspirations; what happened that day in the Chancellery garden was simpler than this—or maybe more complex. It spelled, really, a "new departure" for him: his body, incurably chilled while alive, found its first warmth in those brisk enveloping flames.

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MAKING THE AMERICAN SHABBOS

The Value of Doing the Impossible

GRACE GOLDIN

"SHABBOS!" Reuben Saberski sighed, stretching his small feet out on the ottoman after dinner. "To think the *goyim* don't even know what day it is!"

That was in August, in Stillwater Falls, when *shul* was suspended. Ten months of the year Rabbi Saberski had, of course, considerably less shabbos than other folk. As he leaped for the door from our dinner table one Friday night in November he exploded: "The privilege of *not* attending a late Friday night service is one now being reserved for the righteous in the World to Come!"

"It's just a short service," I consoled him.

Rabbi Saberski cast a look about him, at me, at the eight wet blocks to shul, and the white tablecloth still ringed with wine. "Young woman," he stated, "I've said my prayers already, when they're supposed to be said. I now quit your warm and pleasant home in order to repeat them. And furthermore"—he turned to make his point—"do you know *why* it's such a short service? The rabbis kept it short so you could get it over with, late in the afternoon, and hurry home to the shabbos table where you belonged. Nowadays they keep it short—to make room for their sermons."

The world was all against him, he was born too late, and lived in the wrong country, to be able to welcome in his Sabbath at a five o'clock service *before* dinner. At five o'clock Mr. Plost, his president, was just signing the last of the office mail. At five o'clock Mrs. Plost was pouring orange juice on the roast duck. She never would have got to hear the rabbi preach, and Judaism believes in education for women too, doesn't it? It's a democratic religion, isn't it, Rabbi?

"In the World to Come," Reuben Saberski smiled sadly, "the *Ribono Shel Olom's* going to say, 'All those that were sinners this week, go conduct services!'"

OUR good friends at the State Hospital, I'll call them Marvin and Bette Berenson, genuinely want not to be sinners. Marvin teaches at the medical school and is somewhat of a curiosity among doctors because he strives to bring his son up in a Jewish home. He keeps kosher, and goes to shul week after week—not just on Yom Kippur to do penance all day, like a handful of his colleagues. He and Bette have been here in Iowa City eleven years; being a department head he'll likely never leave; but as long as we've known them they've engaged in a struggle to determine whether this much Judaism, or any Judaism, can in a town like our town long survive. Even their son Daniel understood the issue quite early.

"Let's be pious, Daddy," he said suddenly one shabbos afternoon when he was about four years old.

"OK," said his daddy. "Let's start right now. No more turning on lights."

"No more turning on lights," agreed Daniel. But half an hour later he needed

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FOR Jews west of the Hudson River, it appears, keeping holy the Sabbath can come to seem more like an embattled defense of a besieged fortress—with councils on strategy, tactics, and even logistics—than a day of rest and contemplation. GRACE GOLDIN, now more or less safely established in New York, explores here some of the dilemmas of Jewish observance in the United States. Mrs. Goldin was born in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and studied at Barnard and Wellesley. Her earlier contributions to the pages of COMMENTARY include "I Remember Tulsa" (March 1948), "The Service of the Temple" (October 1949), and "Christmas-Chanukah" (November 1950). The translations from the Hebrew in the present article were done by Judah Goldin.

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the light to play Chinese checkers. "Let's be pious *next* week, Daddy."

We frequently visit the Berensons, to condole with one another as friends met in a losing cause. We discuss the late Friday night service, which the Berensons like as little as we, but they too come: it's this or nothing. We debate the business of whether or not to ride to shul; an academic question: in Iowa City *hasidim,* the truly pious, are those who ride *only* to shul on shabbos. One of us cited a big Chicago rabbi who'd recently got himself into very hot water by coming out with a formal statement sanctioning riding to his shul on shabbos. The rabbinic authorities quickly took care of him, but made no further move toward formulating a solution.

"What happens to you," Marvin complained, "to you, personally, as an observant Jew, is apparently your own business, so long as you don't mention the Law in the same breath."

"You know what Rabbi Saberski used to say?" I put in.

"Saberski once again," my husband murmured.

"What he used to say," I resumed, "went something like this: 'I am personally averse to meddling with the Law! The Law on the one hand objects to riding, for reasons of its own. You on the other hand weep: Rabbi, I have to ride! My heart, my feet, my aging mother, *eka meka*. . . . You know your circumstances best,' he'd say, 'and saving of human life naturally takes precedence over shabbos, but who says you have to go to shul? If you want to ride on shabbos you'll do it without a *heksher* from me. I can only tell you what the Law says. Make up your mind!' "

—"What's wrong?" popped up Daniel. He always says, What's wrong? I wish they'd teach the child to say, What is it?

"Oh," replied his daddy, "some rabbi in Chicago's been telling people what they may do on shabbos."

"What does he say they can do?"

"He says it's all right to ride on shabbos."

"Is that all? He should know us!"

"DANIEL'S *not* been raised the way we were," said Bette Berenson, "don't do this, don't do that, don't dare do the other. We've *tried* to be reasonable and understanding and cooperative. After all that, you wouldn't think he'd object to shabbos, but he does. All that's happened is, we've cut the corners, so when it's his turn to do some trimming he's ready to cut it altogether." And she relayed the following conversation with her son:

Daniel: "I don't see why we have shabbos. We barely get over it one week when here comes another. On shabbos you can't—"

"Can't what?" Bette asked politely.

"Well, you can't turn on lights."

"We turn on lights."

"And you can't play piano—"

"Since when do you know how to play the piano?"

"Drums, then."

"You play the drum."

"Zeyde wouldn't like it."

"You're not living with Zeyde."

"I don't know, I just don't *care* for shabbos."

"What am I to tell him to do on shabbos?" Bette wailed. "He goes to shul with his daddy in the morning. Good. For an hour. Then what? What should I contrive to amuse him all day, in place of what the Law makes impossible? You may not go on an overnight hike with the Boy Scouts. You may not go to the movies, or the football game, or to the corner drugstore for an ice cream cone. He once shouted at me, when he was about eight, "What *can* I do, then? There isn't another person in town who keeps shabbos the way you make me keep it! When I grow up I'll marry a—Mohammedan!"

SO PERHAPS last Friday night was inevitable. Daniel Berenson marched with the Junior High Band in the Homecoming parade, playing on a snare drum. His folks urged him for years to take up some instrument, though he wasn't musical, so he shouldn't miss out on just such an opportunity: they hadn't figured on Friday nights.

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"How could I forbid it?" Marvin cried. "He gets into enough trouble with his friends as it is, missing the Holidays, and you know he's not a pushing boy."

"Well, we didn't have a shabbos last week—" Bette said.

"But remember the kid's face!" said Marvin.

The uniform Daniel was given to wear had everything—bas-relief buttons, braid all over the place, epaulettes, white shoulder loop, and the most becoming hat outside of the Air Force. True, it was 100 per cent wool, and cut for a smaller child than Daniel; he had no winter underwear yet, so they were forced to swathe his poor allergic legs all the way up with whatever came handiest, making it even harder to buckle the belt: "Bet I'm wearing everything but your girdle, Mom," he puffed. He was undeniably committed to the military posture—to bend him would have meant knocking him down flat—and marched sort of sidestep like a dog. His shoes, outgrown ones, were of the peculiar color gained by slapping one thin coat of black polish on brown leather in a tearing hurry. With the first block Daniel's feet went dead and after that he could have marched all night.

"Don't think I begrudge it to him," Bette said, "but you know how it is. By the time I got him dressed and ready to move we were late for assembly with his group. By the time I drove him down we were late for shabbos dinner. By the time we ate we were late for the parade—and no time for *benshing*. We made the parade a block from the finish—luckily we were just in time to see Daniel's band pass.

"But he looked glorious," said Marvin.

They'd walked backwards at the curb alongside Daniel the last block of the march, while Daniel stared straight ahead but you could tell in every inch of his body that he saw them. "He stood so straight he looked almost thin, God bless him," Bette said. "I don't begrudge him the Homecoming Dance either, but. . . ."

"What could you do?" said Marvin. "May you march, and not dance? He was downtown already. His *shiksa*, his date, played trumpet in the band."

"So Marvin drove Daniel to the dance and me home and I did the dinner dishes while Daniel danced and by the time I finished Marvin had to pick up the boy again. . . ."

"It was certainly one time the Sabbath was made for man," said Marvin.

"I'm *happy* Daniel had a good time," Bette said. "He told me he had the best time of his life. But I got to bed without any shabbos to speak of, and I'd been waiting for shabbos all week. I work hard around here. I lay in bed and ached and I said to myself, 'This has got to stop. But where? . . .'"

"Professor William Pepperell Montague," I remembered from nowhere, "once remarked to our class—in a different context to be sure—: 'We are all hurtling, with magnificent unanimity, toward the middle of next week.'"

I WONDER whether Borough Park Jews, bringing up their children strictly and faithfully, can picture what Jewish life is like west of the Hudson River. Our friend Irving built himself a *succah*. He ate in it happily for a week, then the maid came to him and said, "You folks through with that little outhouse yet? Should I throw it in with the trash?" (Irving told me this story in great glee: "Here's one for you to make use of some day!") Irving's friends wanted him to come to an outdoor barbecue—shish kebab—and had been troubled by remembering Irving and his wife standing around at all their other parties politely smiling and saying they weren't a bit hungry. So the friends phoned to find out where I buy kosher lamb, and I referred them to a meat market in Denver (overnight and three dollars' postage away). Irving heard they'd already sent to Denver and quick called up the rabbi there to check on my butcher's credentials. Thank God, my butcher passed with flying colors; so, for once, Irving took dinner with his friends, to everybody's satisfaction, and ate from paper plates lamb roasted on twigs and vegetables baked in aluminum foil.

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What about a single boy out in our Iowa wilderness, brought up in New York City as an observant Jew, who craves a succah, a shabbos, kosher meat? As I watch students arriving here fresh from all Jewish conveniences, I wonder on their behalf whether the Sabbath was proclaimed as a delight or an endurance contest. Are they to sacrifice Judaism and learn to live in the country; or maintain their Judaism unruffled and return to a big city? They have another alternative —to marry and live as Irving lived.

After two years, however, Irving and his wife moved back to Baltimore.

YET our small town is so very pleasant! Shabbos afternoons in October our neighbors go off to the football game, the streets are very quiet, the sky opens up blue and a dirigible flapping flags circles round the stadium nearby as though they—they, the world—had put on banners for us. My husband walks home on wintry Friday nights through the shadowed snow, looking into lighted, small-town-pretty windows. It's still, it's cold; to him the sky looks blue, to me in the kitchen, purple. When he opens the door he's met by a shabbos spirit of roasting spring chicken, preceded in the world of time by rum cake and chocolate chip cookies. His children shine with health and chicken grease, and on the table wait two *challahs*—one for "Remember the Sabbath Day," one for "Observe the Sabbath Day." The local baker who sold them to me as French twist doesn't know yet about their shewbread ancestry.

Our mood is set by ours being one of maybe half a dozen *shabbosim* in town—all six imaginable.

I voted last year in the converted vestry room of an old church too poor for a stained glass window, but which had a brass star tacked up to the brick steeple with a date, 1885. Four voting booths were hung with sprigged flour-sacking. In one corner of the room, coats of the voting authorities had been flung over nails like schoolchildren's; somebody's lunchbox stood on a folding chair; spang in the middle of what space there was, two gold-fringed, assembly-hall-size silk flags leaned against one another, like royalty conferring a visit on the farm contingent.

That vestry reminded me of the one in Stillwater Falls, in Temple Brotherly Love: of its visible waterpipes, echoing stairs, and portraits of founders in their 19th-century beards. There was a clean cold smell in that temple you might account for by the fact that Mr. Abraham Bergmann forbade any form of gambling there, even cards. Sisterhood meetings were presided over with pleasant Midwestern dignity by Mrs. Emma Bergmann, pince-nez dangling down her front, and from the Lord's Prayer to "God Bless America" sounded exactly like Southern Baptist meetings, or Eastern Star meetings, or Daughters of the American Revolution meetings for that matter.

"Ah!" my children's Bubbie would interrupt me at that point. "See? You begin by saying, How pleasant is this oak; in the next breath already you're a *meshumed!*"

What Bubbie says is true—shabbos in a small town is so dreadfully difficult, at times one is tempted to move to Borough Park. And yet we do have a shabbos in Iowa City. We go against the stream, but this gives shabbos here a texture of resistance not at all displeasing: while the whole world is having Saturday, for us alone Saturday's secret is to be shabbos. In us, because it is shabbos, memories awake; each Jew finds himself with a chain of associations, causing him to do with shabbos whatever he does.

My rest on shabbos is quite unlike the rest I get Sunday. I want of shabbos something more than a bed, a pillow, a fat nest of newspapers and to be left alone. Something in me demands a white tablecloth, challah, and candles, symbols which to my ancestors expressed the Sabbath's additional soul. Perhaps the memory of what my parents used to do drives me to return to their symbols. Perhaps they were remembering their parents; but if so, by what a tenuous rope ladder of candles, twists, and a tablecloth might one trace shabbos back to the first week of Creation—or, if that seems too far, to the exodus from Egypt! I shudder and

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I sigh to think that my present, my Friday night this week, is my children's past: I am now the mother they'll dimly remember. And I deliberately order their memories, too: placing in their minds a candle here, a challah there on the white tablecloth.

WHEN my grandfather moved to Tulsa* in its earliest days, he built his own shul, his own succah the size of a master dining room, his own island of Judaism in the prairie, to which he lugged the varied provisions of his learning and ritual like Robinson Crusoe salvaging necessities from the wreck. On shabbos we children used to play football across his great green lawn, from the two front doors of the shul to a square goldfish pond at the wisteria arbor. One law of life was not to torment the goldfish. Another was that all rewards of games be taken out in terms of my grandfather's health. "What'd you wish?" "I can't tell you—or it won't come true!" Generously, though without success, we invested every evening star, new moon, or wishbone in Popsie's recovery.

I recall being alone with my grandfather only once. He drew my arm through his and walked me twice about the tennis court, expounding the Hebrew word *shomayim*, heaven. *Shom*, there. *Mayim*, waters. He laid hold of the lines of rain and pulled heaven down.

In Iowa City one man has created an island of Orthodoxy for himself—is, rather, that island singlehanded. We have a new Orthodox shul, a brand new building, and the shul has one Orthodox member, old Mr. Worton. Jews in this town yearn after his tiny figure—going on eighty-seven—his rosy face made sizeable and symbolic by a good white beard, his blue eyes set off so well by the new blue plaster as he stands to one side of the Ark. Because of Old Man Worton, Iowa City has a *minyan* every shabbos; Mr. Worton phones them himself (the telephone is his Achilles heel). He calls up nine men and tells each one, in Yiddish, "Now you have the building will you quit coming to shul on shabbos morning? What's the shul for? So you're in conference. So walk out on the conference. An hour of *davening* will make your business lucky. Anyway we've got to have you—you're the tenth man."

Who will call and who will come when Mr. Worton dies?

My grandmother kept our private shul going with much the same tactics. She had Daddy do the phoning for her. It was a desperate job. "Momsie love, what's the use of phoning him? He just won't come. He *can't* come today. He's at the office!" "Nonsense," she replied with stubborn serenity, and Daddy returned to the telephone.

The shul moved over to our sun parlor after my grandfather died. It came to our house piecemeal, like the limbs of the Egyptian god Osiris when his jealous brother Set got through with him. Under the oak and absolutely out of context perched two gilded candelabras, craning their many necks at one another. On the cement driveway squatted the *shulchan;* three little lecterns leaned against a butterfly bush. High in the middle of all, presiding over them like a prominent clergyman, stood the unbelievably heavy, bulkily gold *chupah*. Room was found for everything but the chupah in our sun room. That sulked in the cellar till I was married under it.

My bed was on a sleeping porch directly above the shul. Saturday mornings I'd wake to hear a *Mi Komocho* going on full blast under my stomach. I recognized the special chant of every man and could count who'd come already; our service was intersected by late cousins running up the front porch steps and slamming the screen door. I knew my grandmother was sitting down there already, and if I wanted to be cooperative I dressed and joined her.

Momsie was our treasure. The shul was called into being for her, as an *esrog* box is for its esrog. She wasn't going to be wheeled through the streets of Tulsa to the new shul. She'd be seen dead first. She wasn't going to let anybody ship off her shul fur-

*See the author's "I Remember Tulsa" in the March 1948 number of COMMENTARY.

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nishings to some big city "where they'll really get some use." You could do as you pleased after she died; and when she did, Daddy shipped off all but two Torahs to the shul of the Jewish Theological Seminary, because he had been Bar Mitzvah there. Daddy and Mama had an Ark built into the east wall of their new living room. Every night, the last thing one sees is Daddy in *yarmelke* and striped pajamas, saying his night prayers by the light of the Torahs.

While Momsie was alive, however, she expected a shul and expected it to function professionally as a shul. It generally did.

My husband still marvels at his first sight of my grandmother—in Oklahoma!—rocking and reading Michal, an early modern Hebrew poet. I was glad to bring him to the house. "Momsie," I exclaimed, "you've been after us for years to study Hebrew. I finally brought you somebody who can answer back. Why won't you talk Hebrew to him?"

She shook her head—and blushed.

He who never saw my grandmother Friday at sunset descending the stairs to go to shul, has never in his life beheld a stately creature. The carpeting was blue, her dress blue lace; her hair being white mounted her lovely head in waves, with little brown ringlets at the nape. When she was thirty or so, she swept into a relative's apartment in her royal blue cape: beautiful, so beautiful, I'm told, a little great-aunt of mine hid under the parlor table. It took eighty years to drain the good looks from my grandmother; she kept to the last a wrinkled silk skin, smelling like ripe persimmons. On birthdays and Mother's Days her many children used to present her with fully equipped cosmetic cases. Loving all presents, she adored these—cold cream, hot cream, day cream, night cream, evanescence cream, rejuvenescence cream, gland-food cream: "Momsie," I inquired, "how do you keep your skin so white and smooth?" "Glycerine and rose water," she laughed.

We took such good care of her. We even lied to her. "Momsie, you look beautiful tonight," we told her when she was past eighty, and nurse had parted her hair and strained it back into two thin white braids, and tucked over her shoulders the cobalt feathered scarf. Momsie wasn't taken in. "Nonsense," she whispered. In the last years her singing voice, the gay little laugh, forsook her; it was a task for her to speak. In some ways she reminds me of shabbos, the shabbos we find it so hard to observe. "Dear Queen," we cry, "it's ridiculous for you to expect us to abide by your regulations—not to ride, go to the movies, go picnicking, go weekending, go *somewhere*. . . . What's a day of rest *for*, if you can't amuse yourself?"

"Nonsense," she replies serenely.

Then we try flattery. "O Queen," we murmur, "you are more beautiful than ever. That new *Adon Olom*, based on the folk song that goes 'Around the corner, And under a tree, A handsome major. . . .': it has made you so popular; *Lcho Dodi* goes terribly well with the color of your eyes. You haven't aged a bit, beloved Queen!"

"Nonsense!" she answers, and that's all. We can't get another word out of her.

Momsie's religious influence on me was at best oblique and deferred (of the practice of charity, her finest art, she never let drop a word). I'd go to shul when I felt like it, stand next to her, exchange an affectionate smile, slip my hand under her soft wide arm and share the *Siddur* she held with a flat-pressed, clean-boned thumb. My mind sifted away from her honest devotions. I'd come under the influence of cousin Irma, four years older than I, who retired from the Jewish faith to read, study, and preach something called theosophy. At the same time and to the lasting confusion of her family she changed her name to Irena, for astrological reasons. Her new religion was a way of life, she vowed, for all true souls, not just for Jews; and she quoted doctrine devotedly from a little black bible entitled *Theosophy, or the Path of the Mystic.*

At fourteen I read *The Prophet* behind my Siddur in shul, to induce—by whatever desperate, artificial means—the worshipful state of being a Hebrew service failed to

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engender, while the cantor sang:

With an eternal love Thou hast loved Thy people,
the house of Israel.
Torah and commandments, statutes and judgments
hast Thou taught us.

Therefore, Lord our God,
lying down and rising up we talk of Thy statutes. . . .

A thunderstorm broke on us late one Friday afternoon: to me a God-given opportunity to find out just how far I could aspire in religious speculation. Lower than the clouds, the sky was green; a maple blew from green to silver and back again. Everywhere green: auspicious color. Heavy raindrops parted the grass blades, as I dug my thought down eagerly into the wet earth among the worms. In our bushes I managed to start a couple of prehistoric gods, while a long way beyond me the cantor sang:

As for Thy love
never never take it away from us!

That evening I quite succeeded in generating in my mind some of the superstitious awe a cave man felt toward lightning. And for ten years—nothing more. Oh, I'd a vague desire to Do Something for the Jews, I didn't know what: learn Yiddish, or write verses, help aging Jewish mamas across the street, or force myself to listen to a High Holiday sermon all the way through. I never achieved that last. When a public address begins, how much more so a sermon, my mind pops off automatically the way you'd snap a radio off during the commercial—and switches on again at the benediction. During services proper I often sink into a kind of abstraction that registers no meaning along with its word; significance darts in and out of prayers, as around trees, catching on the branch of some apt conceit. I can seek, and find, refuge in other things—browse on *talleisim*, people's noses, candlesticks, and embroidered lions, the seven "nots" of the Torah and the mere act of bowing westward:

Come, O Bride, come, O Bride,
The Sabbath Queen at eventide!

Oh, do come!

It's not as though prayer wasn't available to me all my life. I learned the words for piety early: "Blessed be His name whose glorious sovereignty is for ever and ever." The notion that these words were once uttered for the first time, comes with somewhat the same shock as a realization that Alexander Pope dreamed up "Hope springs eternal in the human breast" out of his own little head. Let a twelve-year-old listen to frequent enough sermons on sin—my Uncle Sam was a fairly frequent preacher—and if her talent be irreligion she'll grow up believing in no such thing.

"You have no sense of sin?" my friend George exclaimed, sincerely shocked. "What do you do for a sense of grace?"

At the best of services, the one at home, there was always the difficulty about being religious: what shall I say of supplementary readings I have met with since, whose phrases stick to the jaws like bubblegum? "Almighty and eternal God! . . . Stimulate every impulse that makes for sanctified and righteous striving. Give us thy divine discernment that we may see the best in all people and that we may acknowledge all men as Thy children, respecting their rights and personalities, encouraging and developing their worthy aspirations and talents. Implant within us. . . ."

I have sat under a rabbi who could only express himself in groups of threes. "Ascend, young Candidate," he'd invoke the Bar Mitzvah boy in a voice of thunder. "Kindly mount to the *bimah*, the platform, the podium!" With such effluvia he muddied those wells about which the *havdalah* prayer sings delightfully: "Therefore with joy shall ye draw waters out of the wells of salvation," saith my translation, but I like Sir Walter Raleigh's involuntary version best:

—At the clear wells
Where sweetness dwells
Drawn up by saints in crystal buckets!

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I believe the stuff to woo us back to Judaism is there, locked up in a Hebrew Siddur, a far cry from the archaic English gobbledygook American congregations rise to recite responsively, looking sheepish while they do so. Who'd think the classic shabbos Siddur contains this—

O God, God of our fathers,
delight in our rest.
Make us holy with Thy commandments,
and set our portion in Thy Torah.
From out of Thy goodness, fill us with plenty,
in Thy salvation make us rejoice,
and purify our hearts to serve Thee in truth.
And for our heritage, Lord our God,
give us Thy holy Sabbath
in love and favor.
May Israel have rest in it
who sanctify Thy name.
Blessed is the Lord
who sanctifies the Sabbath.

WHEN I informed Rabbi Saberski I wanted to publish something about shabbos and what would he advise, he wrote back, "Go ahead. Go right ahead. We'll survive your approach too. It's the Englishman's approach to the Arabs."

But of Marvin Berenson, Rabbi Saberski would approve. Marvin's knowledge of otolaryngology is complicated and precise, but his joy in the Sabbath is a simple thing. Shabbos rises freely for him out of the Siddur, out of an ordered and a flowing service. "Spring up, O well—sing ye unto it!" He wants his melodies beautiful and his silver and satin to shine, but you can't lure him with translation—all words look alike to him. He wants to *daven* in a minyan among other Jews; hates to be bored and hates to be rushed and have you gobble prayers away from him; loves to move with you tranquilly from section to section, from *Shochen Ad* to *Adon Olom,* chant to response, skipping nothing, adapting nothing, singing all he can, and extending the order of the service throughout his universe. While his mouth recites syllables, while his heart sings praises, his mind is swinging freely five and a half feet above the floor, busily filling prayer after prayer with whatever meanings he may need today. He is improvising every minute.

My friend Max Kadushin goes a step further. Max not only davens with attentiveness, he praises the Lord with his very philosophy. "Bread!" he once exclaimed to me. "What a miracle! What a constant miracle! You know perfectly well somebody sowed and reaped, threshed and ground and mixed and baked to make bread. Yet when you make a *motzi,* when you recite the benediction, you thank God as though bread simply sprouted with leaves and a stalk: 'Blessed be He who caused bread to come forth out of the earth!' Farming and milling and baking, commonplace activities, fall into insignificance before the *midat ha-rachamim,* this Divine love so mixed with mercy that He nourishes us. 'More grave,' our rabbis declare, 'is the miracle of sustenance than that of the breaking of the Red Sea.'"

"Golly!" I said.

"A blessing doesn't change things," Max went on happily. "It changes you to see things, just as a poem does. What does your *motzi* do? Acting as a poem acts, it brings to life this piece of bread and by the bread revives your sense of wonder. How can a piece of bread have meaning? It's a great, great secret. There can be no reclaiming of the commonplace unless it really isn't commonplace at all, unless it's commonplace only to the secular eye. When you bless the shabbos candles, you don't make of them something extraordinary. They remain tallow and wick and fire, you see them at the time as such. Your mind remains closely focused on the objective quality of the world—it's you that's holy."

"Me?"

"Holiness," he explained, "is only the attempt to make of personal conduct something remarkable. But now, look what's happened," he pursued. "Saying the blessing waked you up to look at light. The law which governs lighting of the candles sees to it you are waked up every week and your eyes renewed. So the Halachah, the law governing the times for daily prayer, regular-

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ly calls a man's attention to God's world—to the sunrise, to the lengthening shadows after noon, to twilight, to stars. Halachah is the means by which great and sensitive souls lifted up ordinary things and transmuted them. Each blessing takes the insights of great men and informs with them the eyes of ordinary persons."

"What about shabbos, Max?"

"Shabbos, ah, think of it!" he cried. "Shabbos is the incredible attempt, by very brave rabbis or that extraordinary man Moses, to make one whole day holy for a Jew—to keep a Jew holy for twenty-four hours without a break, week in, week out. What an ambition! What an attempt!—to overcome the sporadic nature of significance, by the use of Law, by an ordered and minute ritual."

SOMETHING of the sort Rabbi Saberski must have had in mind, when he spoke of shabbos as a mistress of men. "Remember," he'd caution, "she lays down the law. Just as you don't pay court to your fair one with an eye on the expense account, so you don't come before milady shabbos wondering what'll it cost you. You're the one that's courting shabbos, she's not running after you. You need her. She can afford to sit it out.

"The trouble nowadays," he would complain, "is that members of a shul *know* the service will adapt itself to their needs. 'You don't like the service?—we'll cut it—there!—there!—there! See, now it's just like the things you believe in.' But you can't go out to save this lady, she's going to save you!" he'd cry. "You think this beautiful lady will adapt herself to you? She has all the beaux she needs. She *loves* you and is trying to make your life worth living!"

By dint of a peculiar education, Saberski was more thoroughly committed to Judaism than I'll ever be, but he meanwhile absorbed sufficient antitoxin to inoculate him forever against what he called the Buber-*meises* of the neo-Orthodox. "Read very carefully: don't get taken in!" He brought starry-eyed third-generation revenants in his congregation to admit that there were aspects of ghetto life they wouldn't touch with a ten-foot pole, and spoke astringently of such writers as Bella Chagall, whose *Burning Lights* was a good deal too poignant for his taste—was it because she'd been ill? Perhaps on the frail child colors, sounds, and ritual did strike too raucous a note; or possibly—Saberski would suggest—as a cultured world-citizen much distracted from Judaism, she sought by italicizing childhood to atone. From her account, seductive in many ways, you get the uneasy impression Judaism won't do for the present generation, whatever it may have meant to the past; or for a mature mind, however one yielded to such impressions as a child. She—like others—holds herself curiously exempt from laws our ancestors took for granted, saying in effect, "Zeyde dear, on you it's becoming."

RABBI SABERSKI warmed to his subject—you could count on him to warm to this subject. With the Law, he pleaded, with the Law first of all we must come to terms. And he likened shabbos prohibitions to a cactus fence such as grow in our Southwest: stubborn, impenetrable, yet alive and practically ineradicable. Inside the fence, he'd say, is shabbos, like a guarded pasture. Or, he once told us, shabbos is a knife—a knife with which we are to cut at one stroke through six thicknesses of the everyday. We must keep our knife sharp—with what? With the shabbos laws. They give the day an edge. They clear a space between day and night, business and home, profane and holy, the category of everyday and the category of significance. On shabbos the good intention flourishes, though it remain only an intention. In the quiet of shabbos perhaps there will be time to root out the bad intention like a weed.

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PALACE POLITICS IN THE DAMASCUS OASIS

Syria's Equilibrium, as of This Writing

RAY ALAN

CROSSING the Syrian frontier anywhere is always a little hazardous. True, it is only near the Huleh armistice line that one risks being shot at; but Syria's relations with her Arab League "sister states" are often almost as tense as with Israel. Syria does not maintain diplomatic or consular relations with either Lebanon or Jordan and, coming from Beirut or Amman, you apply for a visa at the frontier itself—which may be closed to all traffic in both directions for forty-eight hours or longer, as the result of a sudden order by the Syrian authorities wishing to put pressure on neighbors.

Since Syria holds the whip hand, she generally gets her way. Lebanon, the *entrepôt* of the Levant, and dependent for much of her food on Syria, is pitifully vulnerable: when the Syrian frontier is closed, goods pile up in Beirut and the prices of meat, bread, and fats double in Lebanese markets. Jordan, since the rebirth of Israel, has been obliged to import almost all her requirements through Beirut and Syria. When border difficulties with Syria interrupt the transit of essential supplies the economy of the synthetic kingdom is strained unbearably; hence the late King Abdullah's desire for an "extra-territorial train" from Haifa.

The last time I entered Syria from Beirut, all was well. Two or three truckloads of foodstuffs had been stopped and sent back to Damascus, with the Syrians accusing the Lebanese of "re-exporting" to Israel the food they imported from Syria. But the ban was actually imposed in order to strengthen the Damascus government's hand in its protracted trade negotiations with Lebanon. Passenger traffic, on the other hand, was normal. The Syrian border officials pawed over my passport to make sure it bore no Hebrew inscriptions, poked about in a card index of undesirables that gets bigger after every *coup d'état*, and then I was given my visa.

Coming to Damascus from the West, one travels through bleak, parched foothills that sharpen into cliffs, where they enclose the gorge in which Feisal's troops ambushed the French in 1920. For miles all is desolation. Suddenly thin streaks of green, each tracing a trickle of water, appear on the sun-scorched slopes. Soon a stream appears, racing towards Damascus, then another on the opposite side of the road. Water now spurts from a hundred springs, crevices, and cascades, and the streams become minor torrents lined with a rich uprush of vegetation. Then come cool glades of tall slender trees, a little further on orchards and gardens—and the valley fans out to enfold the Damascus oasis. Nature, elsewhere in this land so austere, seems here to be lavishing all her blessings on one spoiled favorite. To the most blasé Westerner as to the simplest desert Bedu, arrival in Damascus is an unfailing miracle of delight. It is said that the Prophet Mohammed turned back on the outskirts of the oasis, after taking in the splendid sight from a hilltop, so as not to risk seduction by the enchantments of "this earthly paradise." And more than a millennium earlier Naaman the Syrian had exclaimed, in indignant pride: "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the rivers of Israel?"

Yet Damascus never lets one forget the desert is near. The city is dominated by a sullen, sand-colored mountain, Jebel Qasyun, on which the Arabs locate Abel's tomb. However sweetly, coolly Abana and Pharpar croon of contentment, the *jebel*, simmering in the heat haze, looms as a harsh reminder that not very distant, beyond a last dusty clump of trees, gardens end abruptly and the wilderness begins. Life is seen as a frail oasis on the edge of desolation.

SYRIA was the first of the Arab nations to come under the rule of a military man ostensibly acting in the interest of the oppressed masses; more recently, Egypt has followed in its path. RAY ALAN, a British journalist who has written on the Near East for COMMENTARY and various English publications, recently visited Syria; he here reports on three and a half years of army rule in Syria, by three different colonels, and weighs the possibilities for reform under the present Shishakly regime.

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My Lebanese driver made a detour to take me through a rich new quarter that has sprung up at the base of Jebel Qasyun. The opulent, ostentatious architecture is of the style Beirutis call "hashish baroque," maliciously hinting at a common source for both the architect's inspiration and the owner's wealth. However, as the driver recited what might have been an extract from some Black Baedeker, it became clear that pipe dreams which build Damascus houses are chiefly political. This block belonged to a former finance minister, and that to an ex-premier; these houses were paid for with gold contributed by both sides during Hitler's war, those with gold smuggled from Iraq. . . . In all Near Eastern states, political uncertainty makes real estate the indicated field for investment; but what is elsewhere merely a trend has been transformed in Syria into a stampede by unpredictable military rulers who often cap their contempt for professional politicians and businessmen with socialist-sounding talk.

"The army chiefs," my driver observed, "will be building themselves houses here next, when they've been in power a bit longer." A moment later he added, "I hope you don't have any friends in the Sûreté. . . ."

There were two Sûreté (secret service) men —small, shifty, unshaven—sitting in the lobby of my hotel. If they'd been wearing sandwich boards they couldn't have been more conspicuous. One of them wandered over to the reception desk from time to time to chat with the clerk. The other set out wearily, soon after my arrival, to tail a journalist.

The Sûreté's positive value to any Syrian government is infinitesimal; its contribution to the unpopularity of the present regime is considerable. Almost everyone I met, including government officials, complained and warned about the petty spies and informers that riddled Syrian society and whose own insecurity made them all the more ready to "make something" of the mildest critical remark they overheard. On two previous visits to Syria I had telephoned senior Sûreté officials to whom I had introductions only to learn they were in jail. On this last trip I got the impression that the whole organization has been demoralized, despite the extra funds and recruits that have been poured into it, as a result of internal jealousies and strife deliberately provoked by the military chiefs in order to weaken it vis-à-vis themselves. Whereas the army once mistrusted the Sûreté, it now treats it with contempt. But the ordinary civilian still has to tread warily. After the fourth military *coup d'état*, scores of over-frivolous citizens were sent to the Mezze internment camp for asking soldiers: "And when are *you* going to seize power?"

I asked a high-ranking official to sum up his reaction, and that of friends and professional men in his milieu, to the trend of events in Syria. Satisfaction, exhilaration, indifference, disillusionment, or—what? He made sure there was no one outside the door, and that his telephones were disconnected—people really do that in a police state—and then he said, "Fear."

Syria's first *coup*, that of Colonel Husni Zaim in March 1949, clipped the claws of the "old gang" of nationalist landlord-politicians who, since the end of the French mandate, had been running the country as if it were their private estate. The coup saved by two hours the life of an officer about to be executed for his part in the sale of a shipload of arms to Israel. The coincidence was almost symbolic, for the army had been angered by the politicians' attempts to blame it for Syria's defeat in Israel. Even in this arms sale scandal, War Minister Sharabati and other civilians, whose responsibility was no less than the condemned officer's, had not been brought to trial. Senior staff officers, furthermore, had been alarmed by reports from authoritative Egyptian and French sources to the effect that President Shukri Kuwatli had secretly agreed with Nuri Pasha Said, the Iraqi premier, on a plan to federate Syria and Iraq under the adolescent King Feisal. Their republican ardor fortified by the conviction that it was better to be a big cock on a small dunghill than a middle-sized rooster on a large one, they closed ranks naturally around Zaim, who was already a malcontent and in danger of dismissal as a result of an administrative dispute with the government.

The army chiefs themselves did not realize how widespread was discontent with the old regime until they had overthrown it. Zaim's unexpected popularity went to his head. Though initiating a number of useful reforms, cleaning up the administration, giving educated women the vote for the first time, and increasing army pay, he established a firm personal hold on the Sûreté, surrounded himself with sycophants, promoted fellow Kurds in preference to Arabs, gave himself the title of Field

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Marshal, and showed signs of developing a Goeringesque passion for uniforms and costly baubles.

His first approach to foreign affairs had been promising. He had adopted a friendlier, more realistic attitude towards Israel and Turkey than either his predecessors or his successors found possible. From France, whose Damascus legation had oozed good will in his direction since the eve of the coup, he obtained a twelve-million-dollar credit, some arms, and a guarantee of help against outside attack that still gives old hands at the Quai d'Orsay sleepless nights. American oil men and subsequently State Department officials, pleased with Zaim's speedy ratification of the vital TAP-line agreement, which the nationalist politicians had been sitting on, began to refer to him as the new Ataturk the Arabs so badly needed. Of the Arab League states, Egypt was, shrewdly, the friendliest. But, without due forethought, Zaim allowed King Farouk's flattery to maneuver him into an increasingly violent campaign against the Hashemites (the British-buttressed rulers of Iraq and Jordan who were hoping to build some kind of "Greater Syria" or "Fertile Crescent" union or federation powerful enough to outweigh Egypt in Near Eastern affairs) and, in particular, King Abdullah. This development proved—literally—fatal. Zaim might have survived the mere jealousy of ambitious subordinates and even the rage of the feudal families upon whose political hegemony he had infringed; but Hashemite prestige and persuasiveness—and promises—were able to weld together temporarily two or three mutually mistrustful groups of conspirators. In August 1949 Zaim was thrown out of office and shot by a colleague whom he had especially favored and promoted, Colonel Sami Hinnawi. There was consternation in Paris and Washington; the Egyptian court went into mourning; but King Abdullah, himself soon to die at an assassin's hand, sent Hinnawi and his supporters a message of congratulation.

Hinnawi's reign was even shorter than Zaim's, but long enough for Syria's traditional rulers to climb most of the way back to power. Elections produced a parliament favoring union with Iraq, and Hinnawi and Nuri Pasha arranged a meeting to clinch it. The British Foreign Office's morale, which had been terribly weakened in the Near East during the previous two years, revived for an instant.

Then the sort of thing happened that ought—like the Portsmouth-treaty tomfoolery, the assassination of King Abdullah, and the recoil of Whitehall's whole Arab League policy—to convince Western officials of the futility of carrying on backstairs intrigue with Near Eastern feudalists. In Bagdad, Nuri's cabinet collapsed and he was forced to resign in favor of a strongly nationalist, anti-British government that denounced the union plan; in Damascus, Sami Hinnawi was arrested and jailed by a group of brother-officers.

SYRIA's third *coup d'état* was also organized by a colonel, a shy, soft-spoken but blunt man named Adib Shishakly—who, surprisingly, is at the moment of writing still in power. His immediate aim was to thwart the Hashemite union plan, and, like Zaim, he had French support. Shishakly had taken part in the earlier *coups* but had remained, cool and keenly observant, in the background, learning from his tutors' errors. Like Zaim, he had reformist ideas but, like Hinnawi, he despised Zaim's vanity.

Shishakly is shrewder, more evenly balanced, more willing to recognize his own limitations and seek advice, than were his predecessors. He has brought to power with him a number of young men who frankly avow that their dearest aim is to change the whole face, soul, and structure of Syrian society. He would like, or so he says, to put (for the first time) positive ideas rather than negative personalities into the forefront of Syrian politics, but with himself (since he is neither an original nor a profound thinker) acting as a sort of neutral pivot. It is typical of Shishakly that for a long time two of his closest friends and counsellors should have been Akram Horani, leader of the Communist-infiltrated Arab Socialist party (*hesb el-Arabi el Ishteraki*), and Isam Mahairi, leader of the diametrically opposed Syrian National Social party (*hesb el-Qawmi*).

For two full years Shishakly maintained a façade of parliamentarism and left the politicians a fairly free hand, insisting only that the government steer clear of the Hashemites and that the Ministry of Defense—and hence control of the armed forces—be in the hands of his nominee, generally Horani. During these two years the politicians—and in particular the then important People's party (*hesb esh-Shaab*), which held a parliamentary majority—tried hard to devise means of neutralizing the army. By the spring of 1951 Shishakly felt that the situation required him to consolidate

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his power, and he resorted to one of the oldest tricks in politics to enable him to do so.

His troops engineered a border clash, murdering seven Israeli policemen in the Huleh valley, where Israel was carrying out an important swamp-clearance and canalization scheme. The French chairman of the local UN armistice-enforcement team, Colonel Bossavy, supported Shishakly loyally, on direct instructions from the Quai d'Orsay, and the matter was referred to the Security Council. No one was more astonished than the Syrian authorities when the American and British representatives on the Council likewise appeared to take their version of the affair seriously. British officials—cynically amused to find themselves toeing a French line on Syria at last—admitted in private that it was considered advisable to give the Syrian military leaders some small measure of satisfaction on what was, after all, a relatively minor issue, in order to strengthen their authority, and thereby Syria's internal stability. It was also thought possible, by British observers on the spot, that Shishakly's border incident might boomerang in favor of Nuri es-Said, now back in office in Iraq and eager as ever for union. This almost came about. The Syrian army's own highly colored stories of Israeli aggression in the Huleh frontier zone—duly played up, though not for reasons the Syrians would have appreciated, by British broadcasts and handouts in Arabic—alarmed the volatile Damascene public so much that Shishakly was unable to resist a sly offer by Nuri Pasha of Iraqi "aid." Iraqi air units were dispatched to Syria and stationed there for several weeks during which they checked and supplemented the data the Iraqi intelligence already had on the Syrian armed forces. Then, when the entire Near East was expecting the Iraqis to take Syria over, they were scrupulously withdrawn. Nuri Pasha's prestige in Syria rocketed to an unprecedented high. Advocates of Syrian-Iraqi union began openly canvassing support in Damascus.

THE tension between army and parliament grew. A major disagreement flared up over control of the gendarmerie, the People's party insisting that gendarmes were essentially policemen and should therefore be administered by the civilian Minister of the Interior. The military chiefs, fearing the gendarmerie might one day be used against them, demanded that they be placed under the Minister of Defense. A deadlock ensued that only force could break. At the end of November 1951, Shishakly struck again, shattering the façade he had himself insisted on retaining. Parliament was dissolved and most of the cabinet ministers were imprisoned. First the People's party and then, in the course of the next few months, all other parties were banned. The ineffectual Colonel Fawzi Selo, the army's oldest officer, was installed as "Head of the State."

This fourth *coup* was timed to win the army the maximum of diplomatic good will. The premier Shishakly deposed was Dr. Maarouf ed-Dawalibi, who had publicly called for an Arab alliance with Russia. No American diplomat was likely to lose sleep worrying about what might happen to him—and it was American sympathy, or at least benevolent neutrality, that Shishakly wanted. He already had French support, thoughtfully translated into cash credits and military supplies. The British Foreign Office, for the time being, he could ignore; it was, he knew, far too deeply involved with the Hashemites to risk offending them by making friendly noises at him; but, on the other hand, having burned its fingers so often of late in the Arab cauldron, the Foreign Office would be unlikely to initiate any new policy towards Syria from which Washington and Paris differed appreciably. In the domestic sphere Shishakly decided he had now done with conventional politics and professional politicians: he would give some of his reformist friends their heads.

THE need for and the obstacles to peaceful reform are both great in Syria. Syria is an agricultural country and likely to remain one. A number of factors—among them political uncertainty, the consequent insistence of Syrian capitalists on quick returns, and nationalist hostility to foreign investors—work against industrialization on any appreciable scale. Syria's main asset is her rich, red soil—a considerable asset, but one that rapacity and ignorance are squandering.

Nearly three-quarters of Syria's population of 3,300,000 are fellahin (peasants); of the remainder about 350,000 are stock-raising Bedouins. Big proprietors own around 75 percent of the land. One man may possess as many as thirty or forty villages, their inhabitants as dependent upon him as the donkeys and camels that draw his ploughs. Half, and in some areas more than half, of everything the villagers

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produce has to be handed over to the landowner; where he provides seed, equipment, or irrigation he may take as much as 80 percent of the crop. The average Syrian peasant and his family live in permanent fear of eviction—which the landlord can order at a moment's notice, for where contracts exist they are solely for the protection of the owner. A sudden change in local conditions—such as an influx of casual laborers (nomads or refugees)—may oblige him to cede a much bigger share of the crop to his *bey* than is customary lest the latter be tempted to economize at his expense.

Most Syrian landowners are essentially businessmen and speculators. They are not farmers and have nothing in common with the country-loving squires and landed gentry of European feudalism. To take a direct interest in one's acres, and even feel affection for them, would appear to them grotesque. They visit their estates as seldom as possible, generally leaving to sons or agents the collection of their shares of the crops. Revenue from the land is invested in urban real estate and squandered on luxuries and in an ostentatious way of living that contrasts cruelly with the Stone Age existence of the peasants who make it possible.

The peasant lives with his family and animals in a hut of one or two low rooms. In southern Syria it will generally be made of stone, in the north of mud and domed like an igloo; in the river valleys reed huts are common. For the majority of the peasants, sanitation, clean water, medical care, and educational facilities are nonexistent. Malaria, and intestinal, ophthalmic, and venereal diseases are widespread, while undernourishment is the rule: few peasants eat meat more than twice a year, at the festivals Bairam and Id el-Adha, and except in irrigated areas vegetables are a rarely attainable luxury during the long summer and autumn. Winter is an icy inferno of gales and torrential downpours beneath which whole villages of mud hovels may collapse: the only warmth is provided by smoldering, stinking cakes of dung and chaff.

An inquiry made by the British authorities in central Syria in 1944 showed that in five typical villages, containing a total of some 2,500 inhabitants, only eight families were able to do more than satisfy their basic needs. Twenty-four hundred villagers—96 percent of the population—could not even attain a satisfactory level of nutrition, and half of these existed on an income, in money and foodstuffs, that averaged five dollars a month per head. Peasants in this last category were reduced to eating grass and roots in the winter. A friend of mine who knew the Aleppo region mentioned as typical a feudal estate whose owner gave each family of villagers, as their total share of the year's crops, about fifty dollars in cash, two sacks of wheat, and, for five months of the year, a modest supply of vegetables.

Syria knows no problem of rural overpopulation similar to Egypt's. On the contrary, she is one of the emptiest countries of the East, acre after deserted acre pleading for settlers. Tells, ruins, and dead cities remain as monuments to the teeming population its fertile soil once supported. Of 13,000,000 acres held to be arable, only 5,000,000 are tilled, and more than half of these lie fallow for lack of labor.

RURAL poverty in Syria stems almost entirely from her system of land-ownership and tenancy. Living standards are depressed not only by the direct depredations of the landlords but by the low productivity that results from insecurity of tenure. Fertility and output could be increased in many parts of the country, and erosion reduced, by means (crop rotation, contour plowing, terracing, etc.) immediately within the capabilities of the peasants themselves. But no peasant can feel any incentive to make permanent improvements on land from which he may be evicted, at its owner's whim, from one day to the next, without compensation for such improvement. Besides, the landlord will take the lion's share of any increase in output.

Of the 25 percent of the land not owned by big proprietors, most is owned collectively by the villagers who live on it; but there is generally little effective cooperation among them, or rationalization in its use. Under what is called the *mashaa* system, village land is divided up into family plots that are redistributed by ballot either annually or every three years. Each family scratches away at its particular plot with no thought of making any extra effort to improve it, for by the time that bore fruit another family would be in occupation. Thus discontinuity of tenure under peasant ownership produces the same apathy, neglect, and inefficiency as insecurity of tenure under absentee landlordism. If Syria is to progress both ills must be cured, and the remedy for both—essentially legislative and administrative—lies in the lap of the present military regime. Colonel Shishakly and his colleagues are strong enough

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to enforce their will in this sphere, and they can count on a climate of opinion overwhelmingly in favor of reform.

From a democratic point of view the present temper of articulate opinion in Syria is extremely dangerous. In Lebanon there is widespread disillusionment with what has passed there for democracy since the end of the French mandate; but Syrian feeling has gone over, beyond mere disillusionment, into outright hostility to democracy. There is a calculated, gleeful "this-will-shock-the-Americans" tone in much of the anti-democratic argument one meets; and Britain and America are, unreasonably, burdened with blame for the failure of the nationalist experiment. "It was bad enough," a senior government official told me, "that you should abandon us in the morass of corruption and misrule that engulfed Syria after the departure of the French; but to try to convince us, in your printed propaganda and broadcasts, that this was democracy was both an insult to our intelligence and a reflection on your own honor." An Army officer said: "For the Western powers to pretend, as they're doing in South Korea as well as the Near East, that democracy is even remotely possible in countries whose populations are mostly illiterate serves only to create the suspicion that you are desirous of utilizing the kind of governments such sham democracy throws up, for your own ends."

At the moment "socialism" is the popular panacea. Every other Syrian one meets describes himself as a "socialist," though the general conception of socialism is Hitlerian and fascist rather than democratic. "Socialist" leanings seem to have become such a mark of political respectability that one is tempted to wonder if there is any connection between this phenomenon and Shishakly's former friendship with Akram Horani of the Arab Socialist party. But even before the fourth *coup d'état*, five of the eight political parties active in Damascus (excluding the illegal but flourishing Communist party) called themselves "socialist" —*ishteraki*—or professed socialistic aims. Most were led by professional politicians of a familiar type, who worked only to further family or sectional interests, and were completely out of touch with the masses for whose welfare they claimed to be campaigning. But the fact that they considered *ishteraki* a sort of magic password to power is significant. Only Horani's Arab Socialist party, despite its Communistic bias, and the feebly socialist Resurrection party (*hesb el-Ba'ath*) had so much as an elementary grasp of socialist theory: the former favored violent action and was unique in having a peasant following, mainly in the Hama region of central Syria; while the latter addressed itself almost exclusively to "intellectuals." The Socialist Cooperative party (*hesb et-Ta'aouni el-Ishteraki*) numbered in its ranks a few genuine socialists, but as a whole it had unmistakable totalitarian tendencies and its members were required to take an oath of personal loyalty to its leader, Faisal el-Assali.

Officially, all these parties have ceased to exist, but most of them are still as active as their courage allows, jockeying hard in the shadows for a privileged position under the new regime and striving to win individual officers to their cause. Faisal el-Assali—in "voluntary" exile in Beirut—claims that more than 1,500 army officers and noncoms are secretly members of his party. Horani's group has lost ground since incurring the army's displeasure in the spring. Cashing in on his friendship with Shishakly, Horani tried to increase his personal prestige among the peasants by forcing the regime's hand on land reform and other issues. On two or three occasions he sent messages in Shishakly's name to gendarmerie posts out in the steppes, ordering the immediate division of nearby estates among the peasants who worked them. In due course the outraged landowners hastened to the scene, escorted by armed retainers, and clashes ensued. Senior officers complained to the chief of staff that the army's relations with the gendarmerie and powerful notables were being unnecessarily strained by these antics and Horani's rival at Shishakly's elbow, Isam Mahairi, leader of the National Social party (*Qawmi*), not unnaturally chimed in. Shishakly broke with Horani and for a time had him placed under a mild form of house arrest.

Mahairi's National Social party stands for a Mussolini-inspired "corporatism" in internal affairs and an expansionist foreign policy that would create—if necessary, by force—a "natural Syria" including Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Israel, in that order of priority. This party's growth in Syria is hampered by its Christian and foreign origins—its founder was the late Anton Saadi of Lebanon*—and by the sus-

*Saadi was shot in 1949 on the orders of Premier Riad es-Solh of Lebanon, who was sub-

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picion that it may be a tool of British policy: rumors to this effect were first put out in 1945 by the French, who disliked the party and hit on the perfect means of discrediting it. Shishakly was once a member of the *hesb el-Qawmi*, and though he may still have a nostalgic sympathy for its slogans, he is shrewd enough not to jeopardize his position by hitching his chariot to so uncertain a star. In his search for an ideology, however, he has spent much time in discussion with Mahairi—particularly since Akram Horani's fall from grace—and if the present regime lasts long enough, the Syria of the future is more than likely to bear traces of Anton Saadi's warmed-over neo-fascism.

THE proclamations of Syria's new rulers are studiously "progressive"-sounding, even Kremlinesque. In making them so, Shishakly and his advisers have shown their awareness of the popular mood. The men who governed Syria before the army took over are described as "hard-hearted oppressors" and "incompetent, fossilized idols." They are accused of "flagrant abuse of power," of "strengthening feudal oppression" and "tricking the people with useless sophistry in the guise of popular representation." Close behind them in moral turpitude came "the greedy merchants, monopolists, and profiteers . . . whose only aim was to accumulate wealth."

These quotations are from the regime's major policy statement to date, issued over the signature of Fawzi Selo, Shishakly's straw man. It describes the fourth *coup* in these words: "Meanwhile, your [i.e., the Syrian people's] youthful and valiant army, imbued with the true spirit of sacrifice and inspired with a genuine love for the motherland, drawing on your encouragement and on the blood and sweat of your brave children . . . could not remain indifferent to the appeals of the oppressed, but rose like one man in response to the call of duty and, armed with faith and resolution, came to the rescue of the people."

The army's aims? To "take measures necessary for the realization of the social aspirations of a free and progressive people . . . to work for the transformation of Syria into a modern and progressive country in which there shall be no master and no slave but absolute justice and assured freedom."

Soon after the fourth *coup* a decree was issued abolishing titles—"an evil heritage from dark periods of our history." The government's own civil servants, entitled, according to their grade, to be addressed as *bey* or *effendi*, were the first to ignore it, for they wanted to retain at least a little formal standing vis-à-vis the military directors-general installed in all departments of the administration. Their example is now generally followed, and no private citizen in his right mind would dream of addressing a government official or notable with merely *sayyed* (mister).

In other spheres Shishakly's efforts at reform have been more successful. Merchants and other businessmen are now keeping accounts and paying direct taxes for the first time. The administration is cleaner and more efficient than ever before. Internal security is good and fewer arms are in private hands: feudal landowners and tribal chiefs, though still powerful, are no longer a law unto themselves. A step has been taken in the direction of land reform with the distribution among needy peasants of areas of the state domain which had in the past been illegally annexed by big landowners.

Of late, the army chiefs' reformist ardor seems, however, to have cooled. Clashes on the land, in areas where landowners sought to frustrate reform, alarmed some of the older officers, who—according to an eminent politician of their generation, who told me he had received worried approaches from them—are obsessed with a nagging desire for "legality" and a fear of being judged one day as mutineers. They cannot wholly convince themselves that Shishakly's new order has come to stay. He, of course, is supremely confident, but so was Zaim. . . .

Shishakly himself now favors a more cautious approach to land reform and other critical problems, at least until Syria's financial future can be seen in a clearer light. An attempt to expand cotton production for export, and thereby increase the country's revenue, was thwarted by the landowners' greed for big profits (they were, for example, unwilling to spend money even on preparing the ground and protecting the crop)—and Shishakly is now looking, tentatively, for dollar aid. He is not very hopeful, since, to avoid undue risk of internal upheaval, such aid must be free from strings and above all must not be made conditional upon Syria's joining the unpopular

sequently assassinated by a *Qawmi* execution squad. The party is still banned in Lebanon, but in the last year has resumed its activities, almost openly, throughout that country.

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"Middle East Command," should it ever be established. For the time being, however, he apparently feels it would frighten Washington unnecessarily were he to appear fanatically fond of social change—which might suggest that he was still under the influence of Horani. The progressive declarations continue to be churned out, but they are beginning to have a hollow sound.

FRANCE is still the Shishakly regime's only firm friend, but her help is almost exclusively military.* The Syrian armed forces have been strengthened with French-supplied Sherman tanks, armored cars, and light aircraft, although highly placed Syrians complain, inevitably perhaps, that the government is paying an extortionate price for them, docked from credits originally advanced to strengthen the currency.

More than a hundred German officers and noncoms have been hired to train and advise the Syrian forces. Soon after their arrival they split socially and politically into Wehrmacht and Nazi factions; the former had their way and secured the return to Germany or relegation to secondary duties of the more obstreperous Nazi diehards. There is also an undoubted Communist element—mainly from Munich—entrenched in the Wehrmacht camp. The position of the Germans in Damascus is delicate and at times ludicrous. They tend unanimously, for "racial" and other reasons, to despise their Syrian masters, yet must accept countless humiliations from them; Syrian officers, for their part, consider it politic occasionally to remind these ex-invincibles of their mercenary status and have frequently rejected sound advice for no other reason than to stress this. The Germans aroused Syrian resentment when they first arrived by giving their advice in tones of command; but today their manner is rarely forceful—they have settled down half-heartedly into a rut of routine, concerned only to hold down their jobs with a minimum of fuss and effort until the Wehrmacht has a niche for them again.

The Syrian army has been swollen by conscription, which for the first time is reaching the sons of the wealthy as well as of the hapless fellahin, but political and administrative power has undoubtedly softened its officer corps. "Our officers have never been so pampered," I was told by a leading political personality—one of the few still in the army's confidence—and a second politician added: "Or so flabby!" They piled up reasons. "Too many American cars (which are eating up dollars that ought to be buying tractors), too many privileges and unaccustomed luxuries, too many soft office jobs. . . ." There were dark and no doubt envious murmurs, in this and other political salons, about large sums allegedly being drawn from army funds and salted away for the private needs of individual staff officers. The army, it seemed, had contracted the very disease against which it had waged so successful a campaign within the civil administration.

Why is Shishakly trying to build a bigger army? Self-glorification and the Arabic equivalent of "jobs for the boys" were among the politicians' answers. "To persuade us to underwrite his regime and supply economic aid," a Western diplomat thought. An army spokesman told me: "For defense, primarily, against Israel; but also possibly—who knows?—against Iraq." Syria, he assured me, would never attack Israel. "We consider ourselves bound by the Rhodes agreement and, privately, we recognize that Israel has come to stay. But there are extremists in Israel who might decide on aggression against an Arab neighbor in order to overcome economic difficulties at home. . . ." Unlike Zaim, Shishakly is not in the least inclined to try swimming against the mainstream of public opinion by seeking an accommodation with Israel, and he is sufficiently practical a politician to realize the value of Israel as a sort of bogeyman that can be conjured up at will on the Huleh frontier. However, between the purely opiate expediency of an anti-Jewish stance and the suicide of a renewed attempt to invade Israel, lies a slope down which the dictator has no intention of slithering. This is not to say that there is no danger of events pushing him, and suitably changed conditions, such as substantial Western arms shipments to Syria under the mistaken impression that the Syrian army might thereby be persuaded to resist Russian invasion, would undoubtedly increase the willingness of Shishakly and his entourage to risk a descent into recklessness. (However, Shishakly has recently announced his willingness to cooperate fully with UNRWA in resettling Arab refugees, thus admitting in effect that they cannot be re-

*Syria is now also purchasing small quantities of jet-fighter aircraft from England. The Foreign Office recently announced that all Near Eastern states would be allowed to buy British jets.

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patriated. He is the first Arab leader to do so.

Syrian relations with Iraq at the time of writing are very bad. Shishakly knows that more than one former nationalist Syrian politician and many Syrian merchants, businessmen, and landowners look to Iraq for possible "liberation" from army rule: it is, of course, taxation and loss of political power and personal influence, rather than any sudden concern for democratic principles, that underlies their despair. Possibly the new military government that has taken power in Iraq is less interested than previous ones in pushing the long-lived Hashemite designs.

Allied with the professional politicians and tax-shy rich in mute opposition to the military regime, are several formerly influential Moslem dignitaries and individual traditionalists who are appalled by Shishakly's obvious contempt for Islamic conventions. The dictator and his colleagues give highly alcoholic parties, dance in the capital's few night clubs, and are frequently seen, even in broad daylight, consorting with unveiled women. Two of Shishakly's first acts after his assumption of full power were to "advise" the leader of the Syrian branch of the Moslem Brotherhood to leave the country, and to clamp down on the numerous phony sheikhs, bogus descendants of the Prophet, and other self-styled holy men with whom Syria, like all Moslem states except Turkey, was infested. Only officially recognized dignitaries are now permitted to wear religious robes and turbans and even they are liable to instant arrest if they are heard talking politics or seen in a bar or café. (One venerable Syrian holy man I used to know was addicted to whiskey, which he daringly drank in public, in his favorite restaurant, every evening—served in a teapot!)

Syrian Christians are grateful to Shishakly for his efforts to curb Moslem extremism. Although many of them were strongly critical of other aspects of the army's policy, they told me that as a community they had never felt more secure. The position of the few remaining Jews seems, similarly, to have improved. There is less general anti-Jewish discrimination than under the "old gang," though Jews found in the "frontier area"—most elastic of terms—are liable to execution. The ban on emigration to Israel has never been lifted in Syria, but most members of the ancient Jewish communities of Damascus and Aleppo seem to have spirited themselves away, mainly through Lebanon. Their departure has had a disproportionately disastrous effect on the standard of workmanship in crafts generally considered "typically Syrian." A particularly fine type of inlaid brasswork I tried to find was no longer obtainable. "The people who make it," said one merchant sadly, "are now in Israel. Tel Aviv will soon be putting Damascus out of business."

A senior officer admitted that the departure of the Jews was a loss for the country. "But we're going to try to tempt some of them back," he went on, laughing. "We're broadcasting a regular propaganda feature in Hebrew—there are one or two Arab refugees here who speak it—directed to Syrian and Iraqi Jews in Israel. I doubt if we shall succeed in persuading any of our former citizens to quit Israel but we might be able to make a bit of trouble over there."

Syrian journalists like to tell visiting Westerners how bitterly they resent the army's handling of the press—and editors do indeed tremble on the way to their offices every morning for fear of finding a message ordering them to suspend publication. Journalists are also interned or deported from time to time. But the Syrian press is still as venal as ever—there is, at most, only one paper in Damascus which supports itself without bribes and subsidies—and the military chiefs are at least half sincere when they declare that they hope, by treating the press so roughly, to clean it up a little. The three Western powers and, to a lesser extent, Russia, all buy editorial space in Syrian papers. The old-fashioned way was to pay an editor to publish a given article. Early this year the army forbade this practice. The U. S. Information Office was the first to find a legal way out, by buying "re-publication rights" to material it had itself provided or inspired! Needless to say, such a system defeats itself, for the more subsidies papers receive the more they want; and it is not unusual to see strongly anti-Communist and violently anti-Western articles alternate in the same paper day after day. Moreover, knowing about this system, the newspaper readers have become so cynical that they suspect that even good, honest "hard" news—of, say, Western successes in Korea—may have been paid for, too, and dismiss it as propaganda if it appears too favorable to the West. Pro-Russian items tend to be less suspect, since Russia makes much less use of the press in this way; she does not even maintain an information officer in Damascus.

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SHISHAKLY can afford to take the risk of alienating journalists, Moslem conservatives, professional politicians, and other self-centered groups, provided he retains his hold on the army and on the masses. He realizes that if, one day, he is overthrown, it will, most probably be by another military putsch. Hence his lavish pampering of all ranks. The masses are a less direct danger, though their political awareness is maturing rapidly and it would be uncomfortable ruling against them. The slowing down of the tempo of reform and the rising cost of living have cost Shishakly much of the popular good will he once enjoyed, but there are as yet no signs of any popular defection.

The Syrian Communist party—still illegal, of course—is far less active under Shishakly than under the nationalists. Its leader, Khaled Begdash, Moscow's candidate for the gauleitership of "Free Kurdistan," is rarely seen in public but receives a fair number of visitors in his "underground" residence—any taxi will take you there—in the Kurdish quarter of Damascus, on the same slope, at the foot of Jebel Qasyun, as the lavish new "hashish baroque" villas. Other members of the Communist hierarchy squat unobtrusively on the fringe of public life, alert and well informed, observing a kind of political truce and waiting for the military regime to lose its sense of direction and mess things up.

It is the knowledge that the alternatives to army rule have by now been so drastically reduced that reconciles many Syrians of the literate classes, who privately dislike or fear Shishakly and his *junta,* to his regime. The complaints one hears about the military authorities are numerous and legitimate. But only those who had a vested interest in it would wish the pre-Zaim nationalist set-up to return. "Anything," say Syrians of all classes "would be better than that—*anything*."

WORDS HAVING HOLINESS

ELI SIEGEL

MAY His great name
Be mighty and holy
In the world
His will has made.
May this be with speed,
And in a near time.
Amen.

May His kingdom
Come to be
In your life, your days,
And in the life
Of the House of Israel:
May this be with speed,
And in a near time.
Amen.

May His great name be blessed
For ever, for ever.

Blessed, praised, made glorious;
Extolled, heightened, and honored,
Made mighty and lifted up—
Be the name of the Holy and One,
Whom we bless;
Even though He is high
Above all blessings and hymns,
Extollings and comfortings:
All that are uttered
In the world.
And say ye,
Amen.

May peace come from on high,
Opulently;
And life for us,
And for all Israel.
And say ye,
Amen.

May He who makes peace
In His high places,
Make peace for us,
And for all Israel.
And say ye,
Amen.

"WORDS HAVING HOLINESS" is a translation of the Kaddish, the traditional Hebrew prayer for the dead. ELI SIEGEL has contributed to the *Nation, Scribner's, Hound and Horn,* and numerous other periodicals.

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THE HEART OF A CHAUFFEUR

A Story

I. D. BERKOWITZ

ONE warm spring day, on my first visit to Jerusalem, I decided to make an automobile trip to the Dead Sea. My hotelkeeper recommended a private chauffeur well known in the city as a good mechanic and, particularly, as a capable guide for the road between Jerusalem and the Jericho environs. Within half an hour I heard a resounding baritone in the corridor asking for the American tourist, and immediately after a young man appeared in my door, about thirty years old, tall and straight, with gray smiling eyes and a strong, frank, glowing face. A blood-red scar ran diagonally across his right cheek from the temple to his clean-shaven upper lip. Although the scar marred the fine contours of his face, it lent him a virile charm. A hidden light seemed to suffuse his countenance; it was hard to tell whether it was his light gray eyes or the glowing red scar that illuminated his face.

"Are you the Mister who wants to go to the Dead Sea?" he began directly in broken English, clipping each syllable.

"Yes, I am the Mister," I replied.

"And I am the chauffeur!" he introduced himself, bowing with a comic theatrical air, and immediately switched to Yiddish. "I must warn you, Mister, that I am not on such intimate terms with the English language as you may imagine. If you have any intention of conversing during the trip, you'll have to talk simple Yiddish to me."

"Very well," I replied, "if necessity demands it, we'll talk simple Yiddish."

"Because, naturally, in America the Almighty has probably kept you safe from the Holy Tongue?"

His manner of speech, his frank glowing face, and his theatrical conduct all seemed very quaint to me, and I retorted in the same tone.

"How should Hebrew come my way?" I replied. "Is it manna which pours from the skies?"

"I thought so from the start. One can tell a duck by its feathers. . . . What is your business, over there in America? A wealthy cloakmaker? A big shopkeeper with a hundred workers sewing on buttons?"

"Look here, young man," I said to him, "do you want to know everything at one shot? We'll have time to get acquainted—there's a long trip ahead of us."

"Well, all right!" he said in American fashion. "Where is your suitcase?"

When we left the hotel and approached his trim and shiny automobile, he called out to me: "Would you like to cut down on your expenses? I could try to get another passenger, a lady companion for you."

"Who might the lady companion be?" I asked.

"A very nice young female. I brought her here from the Emek—the Valley of Jezreel. A Jewish girl from Czechoslovakia. Her name is Edna."

THIS year I. D. BERKOWITZ celebrates the completion of a half century of literary activity in Hebrew and Yiddish. He was born in Slutsk, Russia, in 1885, and emigrated to the United States in 1914. In 1928 he went to settle in Palestine, where he now resides. Mr. Berkowitz won the 1953 Bialik Prize in Hebrew literature for his collected works, four volumes of which have already appeared in Israel. His writings include novels, short stories, dramatic works, and translations. He is now working on a monumental five-volume memoir of Sholom Aleichem (who was his father-in-law) and other Yiddish and Hebrew writers, as well as a novel on Palestine life, *Yemoth Hamoshiakh*. The translation of this story from the original Hebrew is by Tamara Kahana, Mr. Berkowitz's daughter.

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"Edna?" I repeated. "Is that a Czech name?"

"A pretty name, isn't it? I love it!"

"And the girl?"

"We needn't say anything about the girl," the chauffeur answered crossly, giving me a dark glance, whether in jest or earnest I could not determine. "She'll be going back home to Prague in a few days. A happy journey to her!"

"Very well," I said, "we'll see what a Czechoslovak girl is like."

The chauffeur took his seat behind the wheel, jauntily tossed his thick mop of hair, and started the automobile. He sat at the steering wheel easily, gracefully, as one might sit at a piano fingering the keys. The car, obeying his slightest motion, slid lightly and softly over the hilly streets of Jerusalem. In one of the narrow alleys our road was blocked by a party of Bedouins, crawling along on their overburdened mules. The chauffeur shouted at them in perfect, rhetorical Hebrew: "Ho, you people who are likened to a donkey, clear the road! Do you not see who goes here? An American capitalist! Morgan's partner! May the wind enter your grandfather Ishmael's broad pantaloons!"

The car entered a new garden suburb behind Jerusalem and stopped in front of a small stone villa surrounded by slender young cypresses. The chauffeur jumped out of his seat and said in Hebrew, as if to himself, "Here she dwelleth. Let us go and see whether she hath not given her love to another chauffeur."

In a few minutes he was back, beaming happily and carrying a small suitcase. He was followed by the passenger, who wore a light traveling coat and was putting a brown leather hat over her cropped hair. I stole a glance at her. Yes, the name Edna suited her fine oval-shaped head, her dark sensitive face, and her youth, which bespoke the first bloom of womanly beauty. She looked about twenty years old.

"Where am I to sit?" she asked in German as she approached the automobile.

"Here, next to me," the chauffeur replied in German, pointing to the seat next to the driver. "The seat of honor!"

"But I'm afraid of the thick dust," the young passenger hesitated. "After we left the Emek I had to wash my hair three days in succession."

She peeped shyly into the automobile, greeting me with a nod.

"But the *Herr Kapitalist* is a man who seeks solitude," the chauffeur started to protest, and a little cloud passed over his face.

"Will I disturb you, sir?" the girl asked me in English.

"Please," I said, "there's room enough even for three."

The girl got in and huddled in the opposite corner. The chauffeur looked at both of us blankly. He seemed to be greatly disappointed. For a moment he hesitated, mercilessly scratching his forehead, and then sighing deeply jumped into his seat and said loudly in Russian, "Hoopla! Woe to my cart and all its four wheels!" and started the car with a long angry honk which startled the quiet street dozing in the heat of the day.

After we left the city and came out on the glistening white road, the chauffeur turned his head in our direction, cast an injured glance at the girl who sat huddled in the corner, and said in Hebrew, "Ah, Edna, thou knowest not how much pain thou hast caused me this moment!"

The girl reddened slightly and did not reply. The chauffeur worked his wheel, keeping his eyes on the road, and continued speaking in Hebrew, in his deep baritone: "Edna, how thankless art thou! I remember thee, in the kindness of thy youth, when thou wentst after me in the Emek, in the land of Jezreel, and when I came to the house of thy aunt to take thee with me to the Dead Sea on our last farewell journey. And suddenly thou hast despised me and preferred to warm thyself next to American capital, next to a bagful of dollars. . . . I look upon thee and wonder—is this Edna? And is this the fruit of thy two weeks' visit with the young men of Galilee and the Emek?"

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He fell silent for a few minutes and then resumed speaking in his highflown manner: "Think not, Edna, that thou shalt escape from me with the excuse that the dust of the road disturbeth thee. It is not the dust of the road, but the dust of gold—American gold—that hath this day estranged thee from me. All of Europe, grown impoverished and humbled in its old age, now prostrates itself before wealthy and corrupt America. . . ."

I listened with growing curiosity to the young man's words, to his precious and yet jocular Hebrew style, which he used with the facile expressiveness and deep pathos of an experienced orator. I stole a glance at the girl to see what impression his words had made upon her. She returned my glance, as if with the same intention, smiled, and said in English, "That's a habit of his, talking too much. . . ."

I was very anxious to discover whether the girl also considered me ignorant of the Hebrew tongue. But before I had a chance to say anything, as if guessing my thoughts, the chauffeur called from his seat, gazing straight into the road:

"Too clearly have I heard the opinion thou hast expressed of me to thy companion, Edna. Thou hast said that I am a born magpie.' I suppose thou fearest lest he be offended by my stern words. Fear not, Edna. Thy American companion, at whose right hand thou hast elected to sit, is, alas, a perfect dolt. He understands not a word of the language of the prophet Isaiah, nor of Bialik, our great poet. We can talk to each other undisturbed."

A few minutes later he continued:

"Marvel not, Edna, that I speak so harshly of the American. I do not care for our American brethren. Firstly, because they look down upon the Land of Israel, instead of looking up to it. Second, dost recall what is written in the Song of Songs? *Love is strong as death, jealousy is cruel as the grave. . . .* It was my hope that thou wouldst sit at my side for several hours, before departing for thy fatherland, and wouldst be a comfort to my lonely heart. I would gaze upon thy dear visage, feel thy sweet proximity, touch thy delicate arms. . . . But came Beelzebub in the guise of this American monster and robbed me of the poor man's lamb. . . . Cursed be the Land of the Dollar, cursed be the Golden Calf!"

And suddenly he turned to me and asked in Yiddish, "Mister, would you like to see the tombstone of Mrs. Lot?"

"Who was Mrs. Lot?" I inquired.

"An American tourist. A very fat Jewish lady. She passed here in an automobile recently. She was overcome with the heat and melted in the sun. Her husband, Mr. Lot—quite a souse, they say—erected a tombstone of salt over her grave—the same salt you find in the Dead Sea."

"Very good," said I. "When we pass it, you'll point it out to me."

"ALL RIGHT," he said, and went back to talking Hebrew, in a louder voice: "Well, Edna, hast thou not heard? Dost thou see with what a creature the Almighty hath paired thee in these last hours, ere thou partest from me forever? He has not even read the Bible. . . . I could swear that he has never heard the name of the famed Chedorlaomer, King of Elam, who drove the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah into the historic vale of Siddim that was full of slimepits. But we shall soon be there, Edna my dear one.

"Ah, Edna, Edna, how well do I know all the places which we are now passing—as well as I once knew the roads of my native city in the blessed and cursed Ukraine. . . . A hundred times have I traversed the length and breadth of this small desert land, from Dan to Beersheba, on the wings of my blue eagle. . . . Edna, with all the power of my sad heart do I love my light-winged machine in which is invested the last of the inheritance I received from my poor father who had martyred his life in the name of the Lord. My machine is my comfort and my joy, the only soul which understands my soul.

"Edna, my comrades in the Emek were angry with me—they looked on me as an adventurer. . . . Six months did I labor with

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them, with plough and with shovel, and on the seventh month I rose in the middle of the night and fled to the four corners of the sky. I could not bear the eternal stillness of the rocky mountains around me. I could not bear the dark serious faces of my comrades who had vowed never to smile like human beings until their ancient fatherland was liberated from its withered stones. Even the stormy Hora dance could not still the storm in my breast. What meaning could I find in dancing, feet pounding on one spot, when my soul yearned to pass into the freedom of eternity, to be tossed from one end of the world to the other, torn between my unquenchable longing for the soft dark fields of the Ukraine—may it be wiped off the face of the earth!—and my burning love for the white deserts of our wonderful fatherland. . . ? Edna, Edna, I shall confide a secret to thee! I love the lofty resounding word, the expansive echoing cry of the soul, the clear shrill laughter which rolls over the distant desert with an echo that replies from all the ends of the skies—ha-aha-ha-ha!

"But I know the weeping, too, Edna. Not the soft weeping that is choked into a pillow between the narrow oppressive walls of a room—but the high wailing that rends loneliness into shreds, shakes the soul to its foundations, makes the heart tremble to its depths. Sometimes, Edna, there comes a night, one of those marvelous moonlit nights of Jerusalem, our city of beauty, when I cannot find peace. Then I rise, I harness my light-flying chariot, and I ride out into the empty wastes of Jericho to make my midnight lamentations. I let my blue eagle loose; I fly like a spirit over white weird deserts, and wail aloud the deep sorrow of my heart, which is deeper than the seas. And my weeping accompanies the heart-rending weeping of hungry jackals howling for prey.

"Ah, Edna, Edna, young sister of mine! Once thou asked me what of the red scar on my cheek. What is the meaning of the bloody mark on my face—is it a mark of Cain, or a mark of heroism? And I then told thee that perhaps a day would come when I should tell thee what weighs upon my spirit. And now thou art leaving me. That day has not yet come, and what weighs upon my spirit will be revealed to thee, Edna, sister of mine, never, never!"

HERE he suddenly turned to me and asked in Yiddish: "Mister, how many millions of dollars did the American Jews contribute to the victims of Ukrainian pogroms?"

To this odd question, which seemed to follow ironically on the heels of the strange chauffeur's thoughts, I did not reply. I had been sitting quietly, overwhelmed by his hot, tumultuous words. Through the rapid flight of the automobile over the white chalk road, they rang in my ears as the extraordinary confession of an extraordinary human being, the outpouring of a profoundly shaken soul. What sort of fellow was this? Who was he? Where did he acquire his rich vocabulary, such a power of expression? And who was this girl out of a foreign land who was sitting in the corner of the automobile as in a dream, listening silently all the while, except for a smile and a flush over her gentle dark profile? Where had these two met, and what had passed between them that they were now parting for ever? . . . I was so lost in these speculations that I did not notice we were approaching the hot circle of the Jericho steppes, and hardly noticed the imposing desert vista which, as far as the eye could reach, glistened beneath the fiery skies like a field of snow.

The chauffeur also lapsed into silence, as if exhausted. From time to time he turned to me, naming the places we were passing, now no longer jocular, but with all the earnestness of a chauffeur-guide performing his duty. Now his face looked sad and withdrawn, and the red scar, filled with some secret content, glowed in the sunshine with a dark flame. He no longer turned to the girl; it was as if he had forgotten her.

Some time later, after we had passed through Jericho, lying, with its green palms and thick leafy banana trees, like a dark shadow across the bright expanse of the desert, and after we had turned off the

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highway onto a broad, crumbly chalk lane and seen from afar, in the transparent blazing air, the deep blue of the Dead Sea shimmering against the dreamy, misted Abarim mountains, the chauffeur, as if starting out of a dream, turned again to me and said in his bright jesting tone, "Mister, if you want your money's worth of pleasure out of the Dead Sea, you better take your coat off. We are now entering that famous furnace which is inscribed in history under the name of The Cry of Sodom."

And he again began to talk in Hebrew, his face turned toward the desert.

"Woe, woe to The Cry of Sodom! It is a fearful place. Dost thou remember, Edna, the story I told thee of late about the warm-hearted maiden whom wild Bedouins attacked somewhere in this vicinity, stripped naked, smeared with honey, and dragged up to the roof of a house, leaving her there to be devoured by bees? This folly was perpetrated in bright daylight, several thousands of years ago, and to this day, when I think of it, my hair stands on end. I could tell thee a story even sadder than that, and one which took place in our day, in a country not so very distant from this wild desert. But enough for today! I will not mar thy journey. For soon we come to a place where the divine beauty of our little fatherland reaches its climax—the beauty of death and eternal stillness. And thou didst long to see it even when thou wast in the City of Jezreel, when we were both sitting on the veranda of the inn, over an intoxicating glass of soda water. . . ."

We stayed at the Dead Sea until evening. The energetic chauffeur at once began busying himself with his automobile. He peered into every cranny of the car; with great tenderness he caressed it, like a horseman stroking a beloved mare after a hard ride, examined the engine and tires, dusted the car, and at the end it shone as if new. Edna walked over to the empty inn standing alone beside the sleeping sea. I sat down in the shade of a four-posted shelter thatched with withered palm leaves, intoxicated by the violent tropical heat that breathed fire into all my senses, overwhelmed by the beauty of this unbelievable stillness which seemed to carry one to the verge of Nirvana. The Abarim mountains, framing one side of the sea and bathed in a radiant bluish mist, shimmered in the distance, as from the other side of life. I got up and began to walk, as in a dream. Coming back, I found the chauffeur and Edna swimming in the sea. They cut through the thick salty blue water with their young shoulders, vying with one another. The low sun was reflected in Edna's laughing eyes, on her slender naked arms and the blue bathing cap that lent her young sunburnt face a peculiar repressed, mischievous charm. As he gazed at her, the wet scar on the chauffeur's cheek glowed hot and red.

When they came out of the water, their wet bathing suits clinging to their bodies, they delighted one's eye with their strong slender figures, like the children of one mother. Edna's fresh wet face smiled brightly as she ran toward the inn. For a moment the chauffeur gazed after her, with gray laughing eyes, then he shook his thick mop of hair at me in a friendly way, said, "All right!" and followed after her to the inn.

AT SUNDOWN we were again in the car, each in his place, on the way back to Jerusalem. No one spoke a word until we reached Jericho. Each was living over the impressions of an extraordinary day. In Jericho, night fell suddenly. A fiery east wind began to blow, the desert was transformed into a dark and burning thing. The chauffeur turned on his lights; a bright beam pierced the sea of darkness, feeling ahead along the road to some distant shore. As the car flew on silently, one heard from time to time from afar the mournful crying of jackals.

"Mister," the chauffeur suddenly said in a kindly tone. "Are you frightened?"

"Why?" I asked. "Have you a remedy against fear?"

"Don't be afraid, dear Mister! I travel through these places almost every week during the night. Both the hungry jackal and

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the poor Bedouins who graze their sheep in this desert are my close friends."

He was silent for a few minutes; then he began to talk in Hebrew.

"Hearest thou, Edna, I truly repent that all day long I've kept cursing our poor innocent American in front of thee. This evening I watched him walking along the seashore in sadness, and I said to myself: No! No rich cloakmaker could have such a melancholy countenance. It is not impossible he is a cloakmaker, but rich he certainly is not. . . . I have not done well to take a double price from him for the trip. . . ."

He was silent for a space and then continued.

"Edna, the cause of it is stupid jealousy. I was vexed at his having robbed me of my last opportunity to be close to thee. But now that we have both bathed in the sea, my heart has softened. Edna, the bathing has drawn us closer, bodily and spiritually, and I will not forget it to my last hour. . . . This was the first time, Edna, my pure one, that thou hast cast off thy garments before me in all the purity of thy young body, and I saw how well it suits thy noble face and stainless soul. I saw thy young shoulders, thy lovely arms, thy delicately carved limbs. Thy breasts, Edna, made me catch my breath. I could look upon them no more than I can look upon the bright sun. . . . Edna, God hath made thee to walk in perfect beauty, and when I think that thou art going hence to the ancient city of Prague, to the city of the famous Golem, and that there thou wilt wed a Golem famous for nothing who will rule over thee, my heart weeps softly. Who will be thy spouse, Edna? A banker, doctor, lawyer? Whatever he be, wilt thou remember, on thy wedding night, upon thy bed of love, that mad chauffeur of Jerusalem whose heart thou didst conquer from the start? Ah, Edna. . . ."

Driven by an irresistible desire to solve the riddle that perplexed me, I lit a cigarette and held the match up to the face of my young neighbor. She sat huddled in the opposite corner of the automobile, her eyes closed, and it seemed to me that on her lips I saw a sweet mysterious smile. The light made her open her eyes. She smiled at me and said softly in English, "He lulls me to sleep with his chatter . . . his pleasant voice. . . ."

The chauffeur turned his head to look at us and said angrily, "What secrets are there between ye, Edna? It is impolite for passengers to whisper secrets behind their chauffeur's back!"

And then he turned back to the road and continued: "I beseech thee, Edna, do not hold it against me that I was unable to control myself and spoke harshly to thee. My heart is in a dreadful turmoil this evening. . . . I look into the dark destiny of my life, as into the darkness of these desert fields before me. . . . Who knows, perhaps it would be better if I sat with thee within the carriage, and not alone in the front seat as thy chauffeur. Do not imagine, Edna, that I despise my work. Heaven forbid! I am proud of my chosen role—the role of chauffeur. I have not limited my work to a fixed spot of land, nor confined it to four hand-lengths. The whole country is mine! I serve my country in flight. In the space of a single day I conquer all its mountains, all its valleys, all its forsaken corners and all its bright spots—I and my machine, I the chauffeur!

"True, my father and mother little dreamt the day would come when I would be a coachman in the holy City of Jerusalem. Those pure souls who now shelter in God's shadow sincerely believed that I would become a doctor, or a lawyer, or perhaps even a banker, like that Prague Golem of thine. . . . And in my younger days I did try to write verses . . . only our great poets, Jehuda Halevi and Chaim Nachman Bialik, outdistanced me. And a little sister I had who was handsomer and cleverer than I—she was as bright as the sun. But how many times have I told thee, Edna, that all these things must be forgotten, forgotten, forgotten. . . ."

And suddenly, in the darkness of the desert, the chauffeur began to sing, in his deep baritone, the ancient sorrowful melody of Lamentations:

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Lament, O Zion and thy cities,
Like a woman in labor,
And like a maiden, girdled with sackcloth
For the husband of her youth. . . .

And immediately cutting the song short, he called out to me in Yiddish, "Mister, have you ever heard this opera in America?"

He did not say another word the rest of the journey, until he brought me to my hotel in Jerusalem.

A WEEK later, strolling one evening on the seashore at Tel Aviv, I ran into the chauffeur. He was standing in the wet sand, close to the water's edge, shading his eyes with his hands and peering intently at the horizon flaming red with the sunset. I walked up to him and touched his shoulder.

"Ah, Mister!" He turned his beaming face to me. "Haven't you gone back to America yet?"

"No," I replied, "but the other day I was in the port of Jaffa and saw Edna boarding a ship to Trieste."

"I know," he said, "I brought her there from Jerusalem."

"Then why weren't you at the port to see her off?"

He stared at me.

"See her off?" he echoed. "Am I a relative of hers?"

"But. . . ." I said, "what about the things you said to her during our trip?"

"And just what did I say to her?" he asked, and the scar on his cheek suddenly darkened. "Why? . . . Did you understand?"

"Every word."

He looked at me awhile with an astonished and embarrassed smile.

"Really? . . . Well, what do you think of that! It never struck me. . . . So you understood all my chatter?"

"I didn't think it was chatter."

"Of course it was chatter!" He spoke firmly, with annoyance. And suddenly he seized my hand, stared at me for a moment, and then asked fearfully, "Wait a minute, Mister. . . . Maybe she also understood?"

"Who? Edna?"

"Not Edna—her real name is Henriette. A foolish German name which doesn't suit her at all. . . . But . . . but, wait a minute, maybe she also understood! If they understand Hebrew in America, isn't it possible that they understand Hebrew in Prague?!"

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THE KING, THE BISHOP, AND THE JEW

A 6th-Century Disputation; Scene: A Hunting Lodge Near Paris

ALLAN TEMKO

THIS is a scene of the Dark Ages: when Rome had fallen for more than a century, and the rich province of Gaul was once again a wilderness ruled by wild Frankish tyrants; when all France was a battlefield and its cities were desolate; when no man was safe, but the Jew was as insecure as any. As a point in history, it is as much the beginning of modern times as the end of the classical world. For the Jew, the vast legal calm of Rome had forever disappeared; and, like the Roman, living in the midst of barbarism he became half-barbarous himself.

Sometime in the year 581 a curious religious argument took place at the royal hunting lodge of the Merovingian kings near Nogent, on the Marne, roughly ten miles east of Paris. On one side of the controversy were two of the most important figures in Europe: King Chilperic the First, a grandson of the conqueror Clovis, and ruler of the sprawling western realm of Neustria; and, assisting the king, Georgius Florentius Gregorius—Bishop Gregory of Tours—last of the great Gallo-Roman patricians, and, in these final years of the 6th century, the leading churchman in France. Their antagonist was one Priscus, a Jew, purveyor of gems and precious stuffs to the royal household.

The argument arose unexpectedly as Chilperic was about to return to his permanent winter residence in Paris. The King had grown weary of chasing boar and had commanded that his baggage be made ready for an immediate departure. Bishop Gregory, who was a guest at the country lodge, had come to bid farewell to the monarch at the same time that Priscus also arrived to say goodbye. Chilperic, a good-hearted blond giant who was nevertheless capable at times of enormous cruelties, was taken by a humorous impulse when he saw the famous prelate and the Jew together. Playfully he held Priscus by the hair and invited Gregory to impose a Christian benediction on the unbeliever: "Come, Bishop, and place your hands upon him." Priscus, according to Gregory's own account of the episode, resisted; and the King's humor suddenly darkened.

"*O mens dura et generatio semper incredula!*" he cried. "O stubborn spirit and forever unbelieving race, which does not understand the Son of God promised to it by the voice of its prophets!"

One would think that in a time when *lèse-majesté* carried the most severe penalties, such as loss of feet and hands, Priscus would have been silent, or at least replied prudently after this regal outburst. Instead, he spoke up defiantly.

"God," said the Jew to his king, "does not need to share Himself. He does not enrich

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JEWS lived in France before any Frank set foot there, and not they, but the Merovingian monarchs were the interlopers during the Dark Ages. Half-barbarous though it may have been, the Western Europe of that time was more tolerant than is generally appreciated, and the Jews as well as other minorities enjoyed a large amount of religious and social freedom by comparison with what they were to know in the Middle Ages proper, after the 10th century. This, and other things, are shown in this fascinating glimpse into a shadowy past that ALLAN TEMKO opens up for us. Mr. Temko was born in New York in 1924, took his A.B. at Columbia, resides, when at home, on Staten Island, but is now lecturing at the Sorbonne in Paris, and working on a book about Notre Dame cathedral, from which the vignette we publish is an excerpt. Mr. Temko has published fiction and criticism in *The American Scholar*, *New-Story* (Paris), and the *Columbia Review*.

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Himself through posterity, nor divide His power with others." And to support his contention Priscus repeated the awesome words of Moses in Deuteronomy: "See now that I, even I, am He, and there is no god with Me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal."

Chilperic, evidently speaking to the Jew on even terms, answered with counter-references to the Scriptures, but Priscus was unconvinced. "Can God," he demanded, "be made a man, be born of woman, be struck with rods, and condemned to death?"

Here Chilperic, who in other parts of Gregory's *Historia Francorum* had not hesitated to debate difficult theological subjects even with the Bishop, appears to have been stopped by the Jew's reasoning. The King did not reply, and Gregory took his place in the argument.

WHAT followed was a mixture of sermon and polemic. Gregory called upon all his late-Latin eloquence and Biblical erudition to refute Priscus. With some satisfaction he told the Jew that he would not take his evidence for Christ's divinity from the New Testament, "but from books you approve, in order to pierce you with your own sword . . . as David killed Goliath." And so the Bishop ranged through the Old Testament, drawing heavily on the Psalms and Isaiah and even Genesis. Once, forgetting his plan to ignore the Evangelists, he delivered a telling quotation from Saint Matthew. Again, he cited a passage that no scholar has since been able to find in the Vulgate. Just twice did Priscus interrupt the torrent of proof, each time with a brief question that seemed designed only to prompt new and more effective demonstrations by Gregory.

It was an old technique, and one that is not dead yet. As a propaganda device, edited carefully after the fact, it remained a favorite throughout the Middle Ages. The incredulity of the Jew is employed as an exotic foil to set off the Christian spokesman's brilliance, as in the opposition of gems in a Merovingian brooch: the more stubborn the Jew's resistance, the more absolute his eventual conversion or defeat. It is the age-old debate of the Church and the Synagogue, a tradition that goes back to Tertullian, or earlier.

This dialectic, with its theatrical possibilities, was as adaptable to the plastic arts as to the written word, and six hundred years after Gregory and Priscus, in the great Gothic moment of the Middle Ages, it was to receive a monumental expression in the image of two lordly rival queens dominating the façade of a cathedral. But in the 6th century, men scarcely knew how to carve in bas-relief, much less free-standing sculpture, and could not attempt ikons on so grand a scale. They were content to scratch crude scenes of violence on stucco or burnt clay, and depicted a misshapen Christ, armed with a crozier, trampling a serpent and an overturned menorah.

The dialogue of Priscus and Gregory, then, will tell us much more about medieval Christian theology than about Jewish reasoning, but it contains one anomaly which must not be overlooked: in this case the 6th-century Jew, with his *"mens dura,"* was not defeated. "We told him these and many other things," relates Gregory of Tours, "but we could not lead this miserable creature to believe." Finally, Priscus was silent, he refused to answer further. Chilperic, seeing the discussion ended, requested the Bishop's blessing, which was given; and then the King mounted his great battlehorse and rode back to Paris with Queen Fredegond and all their savage Frankish retinue, through the uncut forest and along the banks of the Marne and the Seine.

THE Paris that Chilperic and Priscus knew could not be recognized as the ancestor of the modern baroque capital. It was a violent and battered town of ten or at the most fifteen thousand souls, cramped within the walled island and the tiny faubourg on the Left Bank: a Paris that has vanished as completely as its superb contemporaries in Asia which have since been covered with sand. Of this lost Paris nothing is standing today except the ruins of the Thermae, the

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wrecked Roman palace that is a part of the Cluny Museum. All else has been buried, or destroyed. We can reconstruct the Merovingian city only from the debris of other monuments, the shape of streets in the oldest quarters, and the conjecture of archaeologists; and even so, we have precious little that reveals the vivid but desperately uncertain lives of the inhabitants.

In the Dark Ages the main southern road into Paris, as it had been under the Empire, was the solid highway built north from Orleans by the Roman legions. For the last thousand years, as part of the vast medieval pilgrimage route to the shrine of Saint James in Spain, it has been called the Rue St. Jacques, but its outline has not changed much since the days of the earliest and most pagan Caesars. Today the street has lost some of its interest and all of its Roman splendor, but it still provides one of the most agreeable promenades in the world, strolling down the hill of Saint Genevieve, through the Latin Quarter, on a sunny autumn day.

If, as Priscus did, we were to walk down the Roman road into the town, past the Thermae and its gardens, we would come to the spot on which the fine late Gothic church of Saint Severin now stands, with its fascinating neighborhood which Elliot Paul has sentimentalized. Here we stop. On these ancient streets and alleys, pressed against the southern bank of the Seine, the earliest Jewish quarter of Paris developed. Probably Jews had first lived here under the Romans, when, as traders, they naturally wished to be close to the river port. By Priscus's time the community had already expanded so that it crossed the Seine on the Petit Pont, which was then covered with shops and dwellings, and spread into the fortified Cité. On the island the Jews settled on either side of the main north-south route, between the two bridges, and adjacent to the cathedral plaza where they sold fabulous merchandise from Asia. Here they remained for most of the Middle Ages, so that the street became known as the Juiverie.

Not very large, this primitive Jewish community. Today we can walk about its circumference in a quarter of an hour. Perhaps it contained five hundred members; we have no way of knowing exactly. But one fact is certain: the Jews formed a small minority in the midst of a hostile Christian population, and suffered for their weakness. A host of social prohibitions were directed against them, which, if strictly enforced, would have reduced them to a pariah level. Economically, the Jew found it almost impossible to earn his living elsewhere than in the market place.

COMMERCE and the arts today seem hopelessly at odds, but in the 6th century they were inseparable. Rarely have merchants sold so much that was so lovely, and in many ways the story of Priscus, the most famous of these art dealers, is the story of all of them. They traded and manufactured on a local, national, and international scale, in days when a good breeze carried a sailing vessel across the Mediterranean in ten days. As often as not, the Jew in Paris was then literally a stranger, fresh from the Syrian East, a maritime trader like the antique Phoenicians, who bartered spices and gems with the barbarous West in exchange for slaves and furs. He traveled from city to city in protected convoys, lodging at synagogues as Christians stayed at monasteries, and he carried his exotic manners with him: his rich dress, his Greek speech, a half-Asiatic voluptuousness that caused the West to imagine him congenitally lewd. The Parisians would call him, almost as a term of respect, a Syrian, as they called all Easterners. But if he remained in Paris, and became part of the polyglot population, speaking its barbarous Latin and sharing its rough habits, wearing a leather cloak like a Frank and arming himself with a sword, he was called a Jew, and as such infinitely more vulnerable to the uncertainties of Merovingian life.

Priscus was one who stayed. His Latin name suggests that he may even have been a survivor of the Gallo-Roman Jewish community which was cruelly treated during

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the invasions. In any case, Priscus was thoroughly French, and a permanent resident of Paris when we discover him in Gregory's *Historia* arguing with his king. Doubtless, besides catering to the court, he traded gold and jewels in the market square before the cathedral, which was six hundred years away from Notre Dame as an expression of religion, and might have been six thousand away as architecture. It was a poorly constructed basilica, not yet dedicated to the Virgin, but to Saint Stephen, and its essential plainness was concealed by brilliant decoration: mosaics, frescoes, expensive cloths, ivory, silver, and colored marble. Probably the synagogue, which could not have stood far away, was a smaller and less elaborate basilica of the same type, for a Jewish temple dared not rival a nearby church, else it might be seized and converted to the worship of Christ.

We can scarcely imagine the splendor, however, of the bazaar on the cathedral plaza. From all the great trading centers of Asia Minor: from Antioch, Beirut, and Constantinople, from the valley of the Euphrates; and farther still, from Buddhist India and perhaps even the remote T'ang Empire of the Chinese, all the mercantile Near Eastern peoples—Greeks, Persians, Egyptians, as well as Jews—brought treasure to it. To try to recapture its magnificent energy, we must visit the crowded sheds of Place Maubert any Saturday morning, and imagine precious stones being weighed: rubies, garnets, pearls, and sapphires, instead of humble radishes and carrots. In Priscus's market place there was the same tight bargaining—haggling, if you wish; the same loud cries of the hawkers; the same thrifty faces of the poor; identically delightful children underfoot; the same uniquely Parisian excitement in a rainstorm.

THE story of the debate with Chilperic and Gregory, and another short passage in Gregory's *Historia Francorum*, provide all the biographical information that we have on Priscus. We learn that the Jew's hair was long enough for Chilperic to grasp, that in the year 582 he had a son of marriageable age, and that he sold *species* to the King to earn his livelihood. This term could mean, in the variable Latin of the earliest Middle Ages, gold alone, but it could also indicate a variety of precious metals, gems, and lovely cloths. Probably Gregory had the larger sense of the word in mind. The 6th century cared little for narrow definitions. Its wide skirmishing wars, its unwritten social institutions, its half-rural cities and anarchic countryside broaden through the mist of ages, and blur.

There is some evidence, however, that Priscus at least began his career specifically as a goldsmith, a profession that then included the minting, but not necessarily the banking and lending, of money. In the marvelous collection of the Cabinet des Medailles, at the Bibliothèque Nationale, there is a small gold coin, perhaps three-eighths of an inch across, which experts say was cast at Chalon-sur-Saône about the year 555, a quarter of a century before we find Priscus at Chilperic's court. The coin, worth a third of a *solidus*—eventually shortened to *sou*—bears the names of its minters: Priscus and Domnolus. The first may be our man.

Now Priscus is a common enough Latin name, and during this period was borne by Christians as well as Jews. In fact, in the year 555, the Bishop of Lyons was also named Priscus, and Gregory of Tours speaks so harshly of him that we are led to think he may well have neglected his episcopal duties to enter the gold business. Yet it is unlikely that an important prelate would have associated himself with a second person in minting coins, especially with a commoner. Exactly who Domnolus was we do not know, and probably shall never have more information than the fact that he struck other coins than the one on which his name appears with that of Priscus. There is little chance that he was a noble, or a churchman, else he should be mentioned in documents. On the whole he would seem to have been a simple artisan, and a good partner for the young Priscus starting in business.

Today Chalon-sur-Saône is a railway

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town, on the main line between Dijon and Macon, whose chief interest lies in its proximity to the gorgeous medieval village of Tournus. But in Roman and Merovingian times Chalon was a great city, and the seat of a provincial court. Here, if only for part of the year in 555, would come Chilperic's father, King Clotaire, who ruled over a vast kingdom that was fragmented by his sons, and who was lord of Burgundy as well as France. We know that at least one other Jew, Phatir, whom we shall meet again before the tale of Priscus is ended, left Burgundy to serve Chilperic at Paris after the break-up of Clotaire's kingdom. It is possible that Priscus did the same.

So much for facts. Now let us examine the coin, and speculate to our heart's desire. No gold has quite the mystic yellow color of the pure French mineral of the Dark Ages. It shines on museum velvet with a strange, weary force; and we are frightened, and inexplicably drawn, by its disturbing attraction: the deep pull of its yellow beauty.

The coin of Priscus radiates this power, and for all that it is gross to the point of vulgarity in its manufacture. On its face the names of the minters form a circular border for a portrait of a heavy-jawed despot; and although he wears the imperial diadem of Rome, with its cluster of starry diamonds, we see at a glance that he is a Merovingian king. Aside from the rough linear abstraction of his hair, which sprouts from under his tiara, the upper portion of his face is revealed only in a bold profile of nose and forehead, and a single striking eye that would do credit to the modern surrealists. Below, we have a pair of coarse lips, the fleshy line of the jowl, and no more, except the collar of a royal gown whose embroidery is the one touch of refinement in the entire image. If this is not King Clotaire before us, it could be Chilperic his son, or Clovis his father. For this is the barbarian face of three hundred years of tribal violence, senseless warfare that would not cease until Charlemagne (and then only temporarily). But beyond the overriding presence of barbarism, the coin of Priscus and Domnolus will tell us nothing, not even of the men who cast it. For this we must turn back again from Chalon to Paris.

The stalls of the gold merchants have vanished, but happily a few of their wares—all too few!—have survived the immense sweep of time: the fourteen hundred years that separate us from an age that cared for nothing so much as bright ornament. In the Cabinet des Medailles they glimmer with a calm radiance: the perfect fatigue of great age. The violence, the coarse avarice, the cruel amusements of the Merovingians are forgotten, and we have only the pale, weary splendor of the gold. But when the afternoon sun lights the jewelry of these brooches and chalices and decorated swords, they dazzle us yet. The rubies blaze, and the emeralds slowly burn with their green heat. The crystal disks of the cup of Khosru shine like hot prisms: green, white, scarlet; with the terrible Persian despot dancing in the center. And the lovely Gourdon chalice on its mysterious dish of Burgundian gold, encrusted with heart-shaped turquoises and bordered with a garnet cloisonné! Priscus might have fashioned it in his workshop.

But at Bordeaux, in the Chasteigner collection, there is a treasure that will move us as even the glories of Paris cannot. It is a finger ring, again of the same pure Merovingian gold, that workmen found in a street excavation a century ago, and which is the one piece of unquestionably Jewish art that the entire Dark Ages has left us in Western Europe. On the seal is an intricate anagram that might have been impossible to decipher had it not been spelled out in Roman letters on the circular mounting: ASTER—Esther. The name alone is an immediate clue, but on each rising side of the ring there is an unmistakable symbol: the menorah. Nothing in all French art is more poignant than this ordinary ring and the superb and lonely name it bears.

A few months after the battle of words at Nogent, early in 582, King Chilperic was moved by another of his large impulses.

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Acting in the name of the Church, he ordered the baptism of the Jews of Paris. Most of these unfortunates, remembering a violent mob action in Clermont a few years before, which led to forced conversion of "more than five hundred" and destruction of a synagogue, obeyed the King's edict without a protest. Chilperic himself stood as godfather for a number of them, and we have the strange scene of the mustachioed tyrant lifting Jews bodily to immerse them in a great stone bowl of water, while Bishop Ragnemodus of Paris added his blessing. Gregory of Tours, who watched this procedure with misgivings, remarks laconically that although the holy water may have washed the bodies of the Jews, it did little for their hearts. "Liars toward God," Gregory calls them, "who returned to their previous disbelief by simultaneously observing their Sabbath and honoring the day of the Lord." To stop this practice, Chilperic closed their synagogue.

But no argument, relates Gregory, could persuade Priscus to recognize the truth. Apparently he defied the King again, for Chilperic had him thrown in prison, so that "if he did not agree to believe voluntarily, he would be made to believe in spite of himself." This prison was almost certainly the *carcere Glaucini*, where according to legend Saint Denis had been tormented during a persecution of Christians three centuries earlier. The jail, whose ruins were not demolished until the French Revolution, stood on the northern side of the island, near the present Pont au Change and the flower market. It had been exceedingly unpleasant under the Romans, and under the Franks must have been grimmer yet, but Priscus did not remain there long.

Somewhere in his store of treasure he found presents that Chilperic could not resist, and the King released him after Priscus made a promise that smacks of the Arabian Nights: he would become a Christian, Priscus pledged, as soon as he had seen his son married to a Jewess of Marseilles. We can only guess the length of time that Priscus required to complete the wedding arrangements. Travel in France was hazardous throughout the Dark Ages; it could be intolerably slow on occasion. During the delay, a quarrel arose between Priscus and Phatir, a Jew we met long ago in Burgundy, who was now one of Chilperic's new godsons.

WHATEVER its cause, the quarrel was bitter. Its end was typically Merovingian.

One Saturday morning Priscus left home, "without any iron in his hand" and dressed in his prayer shawl, to attend services in a clandestine temple that was probably a private dwelling. He was accompanied by several men of his household, apparently also unarmed. Suddenly, they were ambushed in the street by Phatir and his servants, who cut them down without pity. Then, panicking, the murderers fled to the church of Saint Julien le Pauvre for asylum.

This was not the Saint Julien which stands on the identical emplacement in a charming park on the Left Bank today, and which dates only from 1170, but the primitive basilica that preceded it, a tiny pilgrims' church where Gregory of Tours stayed when he visited Paris. It was only a few hundred yards to the royal palace, and the news quickly reached Chilperic, who commanded that the killers be taken from the church by force and executed. A mob quickly collected and marched to lynch them.

Somehow Phatir escaped. His henchmen were not so lucky. Rather than face the shouting throng of Parisians, they selected one of their number to kill them all, a phenomenon that occurred several times during this period. Successively, he stabbed each of them to death with his sword, and then, instead of finishing himself, appeared at the door of the church with his blood-stained blade. The mob, writes Gregory of Tours, killed him "cruelly."

In the meantime Phatir had made his way to the palace, and in some way—again, we think immediately of sumptuous presents—persuaded Chilperic to pardon him and allow him to return to King Gonthramn's realm of Burgundy. But a few days later he was found and killed by relatives of Priscus, and there the story ends.

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THE AMERICAN SCENE IN COMMENTARY'S MIRROR

Introduction to an Anthology from Our Pages

DAVID RIESMAN

"IDLE" curiosity about themselves, like alcoholic excess, is something that American Jews in the past have not felt able to afford. They feared inquisitiveness from their enemies; and over their friends they preferred to exercise a certain power of enchantment, controlling the image they presented of themselves—whether as sufferers, as bohemian and uninhibited, or as just like everyone else. Those nearly official guardians of disinterestedness, the social scientists, were also slow in getting around to studying the Jews. Compared with certain other immigrant groups around the turn of the century, the Jews seemed not too disorganized, and perhaps for that reason were left alone; our best study of immigration, Thomas' and Znaniecki's *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*, was concerned with one of the most dramatically disorganized groups. Only much later did Thomas, a man with an extraordinary gift for curiosity, get around to studying the *Bindelbriefe*, the advice columns in the Yiddish press (his collection has never been published), and Louis Wirth write his brief study of the ghetto in Europe and America.

Meanwhile, fiction had discovered the Jews as quaintness to be patronized or as victims to be succored—both old traditions, reapplied to the American scene. Fictional treatment of Jews as intensely interesting individuals came much later, and was the work of a few brilliant, energetic writers. In Daniel Fuchs's *Homage to Blenholt*, Budd Schulberg's *What Makes Sammy Run?* and other works in similar vein, it is often the non-Jews who are victims, while the Jews themselves, strident, violent, hysterically driven and driving, are self-victimized by the very American demons to which they have sold themselves. For the Jews among these authors, neither the ghetto nor America offered enchantment; each alternative, whether cultural orthodoxy or assimilation—or the tension between them—had its savageries; and these could only be expurgated by art, not by life.

In general the tone of fiction today is more

ON FEBRUARY 16, Alfred A. Knopf will bring out *Commentary on the American Scene*, a selection of about twenty from more than a hundred articles in which COMMENTARY, in its seven years of publication, has explored the complex patterns of Jewish experience in this country. Most of the pieces in the volume are taken from the department called "From the American Scene," which has appeared in every issue since the beginning, but as our faithful readers know, that department has not sufficed to contain all that COMMENTARY writers have had to say about what has happened to them and to their kinsmen and *landsleit* on these shores since Columbus sighted San Salvador. We publish here DAVID RIESMAN's introduction to the forthcoming volume; as a footnote to Mr. Riesman's commentary, we append Elliot E. Cohen's brief foreword to the book—an editor, it has been said, is someone who, while obviously he should neither be seen nor heard, somehow manages to have both the first and last word. Mr. Riesman is the author (in collaboration with Reuel Denny and Nathan Glazer) of *The Lonely Crowd*, a study of the American character which since its publication in 1950 has added several significant new concepts to our national self-awareness. *Commentary on the American Scene* includes contributions by the following writers: Morris Freedman, Herbert J. Gans, Harry Gersh, Ruth Glazer, Grace Goldin, Irving Howe, Milton Kaplan, Isa Kapp, Shlomo Katz, Milton Klonsky, Wallace Markfield, Donald Paneth, William Poster, Earl Raab, Ernest Stock, May Natalie Tabak, Samuel Tenenbaum. Yes, "The Jewish Delicatessen," "The Jewish Paintner," "'Twas a Dark Night in Brownsville," "My Grandmother Had Yichus," "The Trojans of Brighton Beach," and other favorites are in the book.

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subdued (of course the older genres survive), more aware of shadings and ambiguities. Think, for instance, of Isaac Rosenfeld's *Passage from Home*, or Saul Bellow's *The Victim*, or the elegiac mood of Alfred Kazin's autobiographical homage to Brownsville, *A Walker in the City*. There is no wish in these works to shake one's fist at either America or the Jews, but rather a resignation to both and a recognition that the existential dramas of daily living are colored rather than created by ethnic and cultural localism. In other words, now that it can be admitted, without rancor or apology, that Jews are different, emphasis can be put on the similarities between their fate and that of other people. It is on that assumption, indeed, that the essays in this volume rest: the assumption that Jews are interesting but not particularly special either in privilege or underprivilege. That is, the Jews are chosen not by history or God but by the writer, because of his familiarity with them or his fondness for them or by his interest in them.

THE portrait painter has to place his easel; the essayist, novelist, or social scientist has to locate himself vis-à-vis his subject. Most of the subjects in this book, whether college students, delicatessen owners, or the Jews of San Francisco or "Spruceton" in New England, fall, I suppose, within the broad band of the urban middle class. (There are, to be sure, some garment workers of a bygone day and some chicken farmers who are as up-to-date as Space Cadets, but, as we shall see, there is scarcely a representative of the upper social strata.) Now, the urban middle class has been the butt of aristocratic satire since it first rose into prominence; socialism took over much of the aristocracy's contempt for the bourgeois, so much so that for Karl Marx as for Brooks Adams "the Jew" could be a despised symbol of the banker, the merchant, the soft yet calculating city slicker. When, after 1929, the American middle class, which, much more than Europe's, had escaped such contempt, turned out to be not only philistine but unsuccessful too, the intellectuals, most of whom were themselves members of the same social group, heaped bitterness upon it. Since the Jewish middle class was hardly less unsuccessful in the depression and since it had fewer traditions, the Jewish intellectuals made good their liberation from it by either merging Jewishness with the cause of the oppressed-at-large or by reserving their most savage digs for the "petty bourgeois" closest to them, the very types now celebrated by affection in this volume.

Since those days, two things have happened. Hitler and Stalin have made it plain to many that there are worse vices than the alleged bad taste and softness of the middle class, worse exploitations than those of "the bosses" or landlords or storekeepers of American capitalism. And at the same time, the middle class has itself become more differentiated, more sophisticated, more interesting and various. Indeed the revaluation of "ordinary" Jewish life which these collected pieces represent is part of a more general revaluation of the American middle class by its erstwhile more aggressively alienated sons. The authors of some of these articles have sought, not for a gambit of savagery and fanaticism, of wanting to do away with all that is merely local, but for a gambit of tolerance, wit, and "idle curiosity." Thus, they do not propose to sweep the petty-bourgeois Jew into the "dustbin of history"; in fact, Shlomo Katz's piece ("Heritage") is a paean to dust, if it be only old and settled enough.

Yet there are obvious dangers in this shift in perspective—dangers of becoming merely pious, sentimental, and hortatory about Jewish, and, more broadly, about middle-class life. The middle-class American's attitude towards the Jews has often degenerated into the corniness and schmaltziness we are familiar with in many radio and movie "treatments" produced by both Jews and non-Jews. Likewise, the "turn to religion" of many intellectuals often takes, among Jews, the form of an artificial identification with whatever can be labeled as part of an authentic folk culture. We already see the tendency to idealize the life of the *shtetl*, the small Jewish village community in Eastern Europe, now that it has vanished, much as we idealize

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the Indians, the pioneers, and other small folksy groups. (Of the analogous tendency to sentimentalize life in the kibbutz, or in Israel generally, we need not speak here.) Similarly, when our parents and earlier ancestors have become too weak and defenseless further to cripple our emancipation, we can sentimentalize them—"killing" them by the false kindness of applying the maxim: *de mortuis nihil nisi bonum*. Perhaps the Jews are especially prey to the two extremes of a vindictive and aggressive and contemptuous attitude towards tradition and a honeyed and sentimental one, and a loss of all tension between these in any orgy of reconciliation is a particular risk today when the Jews, because they have been victims, and the Americans, because they have been victors, are threatened by complacency.

THUS, what COMMENTARY is doing is precarious; a sharp and acrid curiosity is a needful preventive against any tendencies to become false and pious about the Jewish past and present. Not all essays in this volume escape. But fortunately the refugees in Ernest Stock's article ("Washington Heights' 'Fourth Reich'") are not treated with tears, nor the boyhoods of William Poster ("'Twas a Dark Night in Brownsville") and Milton Klonsky ("The Trojans of Brighton Beach") with excess nostalgia. Then, too, sentimentality is eschewed in those pieces which recognize that, on the whole, the Jews of America do pretty well—and despite the long faces they may pull when they launch fund drives for "defense." These articles are rich—perhaps, from my ascetic background, I should say overstuffed—with consumables, whether in a city delicatessen or a summer "kochalein." (Indeed, the addiction to food—brilliantly dealt with in Kazin's book—seems to be at once frenetic and sedative, and talk about food among Jews may be a kind of ersatz sexuality, a proof of one's belonging both to a gender and to a cultural group.) Then there are the intangibles: for instance, the library in which Brownsville's intellectual youth nourished itself in preparation for escape; or the "yichus," the aristocratic airs of a self-styled elegant and minatory grandma. And on the side of occupations, the essays also indicate a certain richness: Morris Freedman, in his article on the contemporary Jewish student ("The Jewish College Student: 1951 Model"), even regrets the disappearance of the older penury, radicalism, and vocation for the intellectual life as he watches his students prepare for such formerly *Judenfrei* professions as engineering. Anti-Semitism, where it exists at all in these pages, is only smoke from a distant fire. When the Jews of Park Forest, as described by Herbert Gans ("Park Forest: Birth of a Jewish Community"), set out to provide a "Jewish" cultural and religious life for their children, they are beset, in this moderately well-heeled and unashamedly amiable Chicago suburb, by the artificiality of forcing on their youngsters a group consciousness which they themselves have no urgent reasons to preserve.

Take, for another example, the problems that beset the "Jewish paintner" of Mr. Gersh's article ("The Jewish Paintner"). They are essentially the same problems which (as my colleague, Everett Hughes, has described them) confront any occupational group: how to keep customers cowed and at a distance; how to prevent one's own routines from being upset by the client's emergency (in this case, a passionate desire for a particular color effect); how to control one's own pace of work and guard one's own sense of craft even though one operates under the ever-present eye of the client (in this case, abetted by the home-decoration magazines). Such tensions are common to all occupations, though they may be less well-concealed in the humbler ones. Thus, there is nothing in this article which is distinctively Jewish—nothing but the vocabulary (no small matter). But that is just the point: it is intriguing to see what patterns of speech and modes of insolence Jewish painters have contributed to one of history's oldest struggles, the struggle between the seller and the buyer of service. And I am especially glad to see a study made of an occupational group that is neither glamorous nor oppressed nor oppressing, for here curiosity and personal accident guide us

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to what is interesting or near at hand, without portentousness or the need to make some kind of thesis for which the workers or consumers are mere pawns.

THE Jews, then, have moved far enough along in America to be able to afford the same problems—of work, of consumption, of community life—as their neighbors. They do not need to be buoyed up by an apocalyptic future, a menacing present, a chauvinist past. They take their Jewishness sufficiently for granted to permit us the luxury of examining in detail the enormously different ways there are of being at the same time both Jewish and American.

I must add, in fairness, that my own way and that of many other Jews I know is not represented here. The well-to-do and highly assimilated German Jews who in Philadelphia have been referred to as the Grand Dukes; the Jews who constitute what in Catholic circles would be termed "the leakage"—those who have severed all or virtually all Jewish ties; the few old-family upper-class Jews who have not lost their identity either in Christianity and change-of-name or in Zionism and other forms of fraternization with the later arrivals—none of these are included in the circles of sympathy and interest in this volume. Largely, the book grows out of the East European and Yiddish cultures which are those of the great majority of American Jews.

There is no harm in this; a book or a series must start somewhere. And for those who, like myself, were brought up with an almost hermetic ignorance of all things Jewish—an ignorance much greater than that of many non-Jews in New York or Chicago—there is a great advantage in this concentration on the middle and particularly the lower-middle strata of Jewish community life. Jewish culture coming from these strata has had a very considerable part in shaping lower-middle-class urban culture as a whole—something very much resented, of course, by people of rural, fundamentalist background. In contrast, some Jews and non-Jews who have moved in more sheltered circles may be stimulated by this book to find their way, first vicariously and later in person, to adventures across class lines and ethnic lines—to exploration of the heterogeneity which American urban life, despite all standardizing tendencies, continues to encourage. It could even be argued that glamor in America is no longer monopolized by the upper strata (however these are defined) but is sought by adventures downward rather than upward in the class system—adventures legitimized more readily today than social climbing is. Certainly I find it easier to interest my middle-class students in lower-class than in upper-class life—sometimes they deny the very existence of the latter, save in terms of income gradations—and fiction, save for Marquand and one or two other writers, avoids the upper class much as sociology has tended to do.

One reason for this, perhaps, is that the writers in this volume have risen above the class and cultural origins they describe and, like the traditional American self-made man, can reminisce, so to speak, downwards; not being ambitious to move higher still—they have become intellectuals and, as such, partly side-stepped the status game—they can accept without bitterness or concealment the ethnic and class base from which they have graduated. One reason for this lack of bitterness is that the parents of today's Jewish intellectuals seem to have been not only willing but eager to see them graduate—which may be one reason why the Jewish college graduate (as *They Went to College* reveals) makes more money than his Protestant, and much more than his Catholic, classmate; family ties have helped the Jewish intellectual rather than held him back. At the same time, these Jews, unlike Scott Fitzgerald, the Irish boy from St. Paul, do not want to crash into an exclusive set—and so they either ignore the existence of such a set or find no fascination in it.

IT FOLLOWS from this that these essays characteristically combine two American themes: democracy and social mobility, both harmonized by not pushing each too far. The

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mobility may take geographic form—witness the movements into and out of such areas as Brownsville, Brighton, the West Bronx, and the Grand Concourse. It may take religious form—as, for example, in Grace Goldin's historical description of patterns of worship ("I Remember Tulsa"). It may take financial form—as in the Alger stories of Milton Kaplan ("Private Enterprise in the Bronx") and in Wallace Markfield's picture of the Seventh Avenue "bosses" ("Seventh Avenue: Boss and Worker"). All these shifts in taste, assimilation, worship, residence, and understanding are direct and unequivocal. But the very existence of this volume is indirect testimony to the social mobility of Jews as a group. For if its writers and prospective readers were not themselves reasonably secure in their Americanization, they could hardly profess such an interest in the humble incunabula of Jewish communal life; rather, they would have to establish their distance from it. As the Italian immigrant has to go through a gastronomically bleached and bland period before he can again publicly eat garlic and spaghetti, so the Jewish immigrant must also become Americanized before he can again comfortably take pride and pleasure in his ethnic cuisine, idiom, and gesture. It is evidence, then, of his having establishment as an American that he can afford a sprinkling of Yiddish in his speech, a Jewish dish at his table. I speak here, of course, about Jews for whom the non-Jewish audience, real or imagined, is an important influence—even if only an influence to be righteously rejected. Assimilation works less dramatically but perhaps even more surely among the Jews who live, in fact and feeling, in an almost entirely Jewish world; they move as a group, and by imperceptible steps, away from the ethnic culture, with less pronounced cycles of ambivalent rebellion and return.

To be sure, this metaphorical mobility within America, in terms of what one can accept of one's lowly or immigrant past, has been speeded by developments outside America. The stolidly conservative Spanish and German Jews, under the impact of recent immigration and recent history, have lost ground much faster than conservative Protestants of similar class position—*They Went to College* shows that only 6 per cent of Jewish college graduates today classify themselves as Republicans. Thus, to have a working-class background or perhaps even working-class manners can be as much a source of pride among American Jews as among Israelis—both reflect the worldwide tendencies towards democratization. Furthermore, the fight against Hitler and Nazi anti-Semitism, the widespread crusade against ethnocentrism and prejudice of race as well as class, has had as one of its minor consequences a willingness on the part of many Jews to accept—even to flaunt—a Jewishness they would once have wished to play down. And for the many American Jews for whom European events are still pretty far away, the local chapters of national organizations, and particularly their ferocious fund drives, have served as continuing and only half unwelcome reminders that one was a Jew, that—anti-Semitism or no—one was stuck with this Jewishness, and that one might as well attend the rally, enjoy the food and the "Jewish" jokes, and pay the collector.

On the other hand, non-Jews, out of shame, sympathy, or simply an altered focus of attention, have sought to familiarize themselves with Jewish matters. Indeed, the use by non-Jews of Yiddish phrases, their knowing references to the Jewish worlds of New York, their fondness for Jewish foods, are sometimes symbolic ways of indicating sympathy, lack of prejudice, and the urban sophistication for which Jews are supposed to stand. In the increasing venturesomeness of American leisure and consumption, Jews play a large share as models and pacesetters, and the Protestant revolt against Protestantism makes frequent use of them: to be emancipated in America means to have Jewish friends, either in fact or fancy.

The economic well-being of the Jews in contemporary America thus appears to have at least two aspects. Coming here as one of the few immigrant groups which already

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had something of an urban, intellectual culture—and a certain experience in combating discrimination—the Jews succeeded in rapidly adapting themselves to the business and professional opportunities of an expanding metropolitanism. This adaptation, however, was never internalized. Most Jews never learn a true devotion to their vocations, to substitute for their devotion to family, fame, career, and the main chance. Thus, the Jews were prepared, somewhat in advance of other groups, for the general shift of cosmopolitan America towards leisure-minded rather than work-minded attitudes. My guess is that a study would show that Jews were among the first to ride commercial airlines for ease as well as for business reasons, to install air-conditioning, to run hospitals that didn't smell of ether (sickness may be regarded as a form of leisure), to take winter vacations, and otherwise to pioneer on the frontiers of comfort. In "West Bronx: Food, Shelter, Clothing," Mrs. Glazer describes some of the pioneer styles, and she grasps (as Jacques Barzun does more generally in his brilliant *Harper's* article on "America's Romance with Practicality") the substructure of idealism beneath this seeming devotion to the things of matter that matter.

But of course there are many Jews of whom all this is not true—Jews who have had no part in the progression by which the casserole and the icebox have replaced the melting pot as America's contribution to ethnic harmony. For some of the Jews reported on in this volume are Puritanical; those who obey the Law, and those who, in Brownsville's library, prepare to leave it behind, live lives which may be intense but which are hardly gay or colorful. Where it is not simply a stereotype, the American image of the Jews has been set in the mold of a few—of a minority within the minority. Both Jew and non-Jew may find in this volume a greater range of "Jewish" existence than they had known of.

And this leads me to recur to the view that such a volume should be thought of as a first installment in a long series of portraits. There are recorded here some vanishing, if not vanished types and scenes: the old-clothes man, the genteel lace-curtain grandma of "My Grandmother Had Yichus," the early *shul* in Tulsa, the new Eden in San Francisco. Doubtless, the amateur and gifted anthropologists represented here wanted to describe these persons and places before acculturation should alter them beyond recognition. But Jewish life in America is changing so rapidly that new kinds of persons and new kinds of places are always being thrown up—Morris Freedman's article on the new-model Jewish college student is one such attempt to capture the future as well as recapture the past. And in turn our other ethnic groups in America need to be looked at with the kind of attention illustrated here. Matthew Arnold's conclusion, in 1883, that America was simply "not interesting" was not true then; today, it would be a fantastic statement about so various, so enterprising, so spirited a culture. Good reporting about that culture is itself part of that variety, that enterprise, that spirit.

Editor's Postscript

Most of the Commentary pieces that make up this book were published in the department of the magazine called "From the American Scene." They are written by Jews about Jews. Inescapably, one might think, they would be anxious, defensive, aggrieved, purposeful. Paradoxically, they are not. They aim neither to prove anything, to solve anything, nor to make a "contribution" to the times or the ages. They are written for enjoyment, and *with* enjoyment, we guess—and need no introduction. So—they have two, by the editor himself and a guest professor—and of sociology, no less.

Perhaps it is that one feels that Commentary, even after all of seven years of existence, still needs a word or two of explanation. The official statement that it is a magazine devoted to "Jewish affairs and world issues" for some reason doesn't suffice. People ask questions, plenty of them. We like best of all the definition which one of our subscribers overheard his eldest giving: "Well, Commentary is like the *Atlantic Monthly* or *Harper's*, you know, serious, but more serious . . . but more funny too—say, that's funny!"

Well, perhaps Commentary is a bit odd, as befits a Jewish magazine. One oddity is that so

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"specialist" a magazine gives so much of its pages to "general" affairs; another, that by now so large a proportion of its non-Jewish readers read it, as they say, "religiously" and find it "represents them," reflects what they feel and think. And of all its oddities, many readers profess to find most odd the department "From the American Scene"—so "popular" a department in so "serious" a magazine.

As A matter of fact, this department has from its inception been, in the editor's view, nearest of all to the heart of the magazine's purpose. It was our thought to use many methods to help bring American Jews and their concerns into their own and the public view with fuller knowledge and insight than generally obtains —historical reconstruction, intellectual analysis, reportage, religious reflection, sociological and other scientific study, fiction. But from the 17th century we remembered one way of writing about human life that has fallen into disuse, though it was once immensely fruitful and indeed may be said to be the mother method of journalism. We refer to those informal sketches from daily life called "characters." Less specific than the individual incident or personality, less general than the scientific or philosophical essay, these sketches of representative figures and scenes built up a typology of the familiar life of their times.

In "From the American Scene" it was our hope to provide a similar picture gallery of Jews and their familiar ways of life "on the American scene." What could be simpler than to look about and write of what you saw and remembered of the landscape nearest to you? Of course nothing is more difficult to do than just this, especially in these times, and especially with Jews. It is the very last mode in which it is fashionable to write today—and who writes about Jews except problematically, creating new problems where, heaven knows, enough exist already? Who writes of human beings simply as human beings, taking the stance of neither the scientist, nor the objective reporter, nor the detached social or psychological novelist, but *con amore*, identifying oneself with the common life and being open to it and about it—and about oneself?

But it can be done, as this book shows. Whatever the novelists and the deep thinkers and the apocalyptic politicals dredge up—alas, all too accurately!—about this desperate world, and whatever they discover about the Jews, that most desperate of peoples, it is still possible for Jews in America to look at their lives with a new ease—an ease that comes from the realization that here they, like a hundred other kinds of people, are at home, and can at last permit themselves to sit around once in a while in their house slippers, and even let the neighbors see them through the windows *en famille* with their hair in curl-papers and their suspenders dropped.

IN THE introduction he has written for this volume, David Riesman speaks with great penetration of what these pieces show of the Jewish group in the American setting—their origins, their socio-economic status, etc. I should like, myself, to mention briefly an aspect which he does not much touch upon, possibly because he is looking chiefly elsewhere as, indeed, the writers of these pieces were, mostly. I refer to that extra dimension given to Jewish personality and life by the fact that each Jew moves, consciously or not, in the context of a long and special history and a religious-ethical tradition that lays upon him, whether as a burden or a badge of pride, the sense of being "chosen," and so creates in him the tendency, even the obligation, to carry himself "with a difference."

It is this that plays a persistent counterpoint —humorous, pathetic, tragic, farcical, serious-making—to whatever Jews do or are.

Under the caftan in the ghetto we were princes of the most royal of all lineages—as Sholom Aleichem's "Tevye the Dairyman" said, "the envy and admiration of the world"—and vestiges of this magnificent pride remain somewhere in each of us. The Jewish "paintner" behaves as he does—and how he behaves!—because, in addition to all the good reasons Mr. Riesman cites, what kind of life is it anyway for a grown Jew to be daubing cinnamon-bun tan on some silly woman's dinette?

More than once in a while in these sketches there shows through, often undefined but still real, the enduring hold of Jewish historic memory. And perhaps as COMMENTARY goes on into the years following, we shall see it exhibited more often and explicitly—and more often, too, without the nostalgic sense of loss, but as something cherished that is felt likely to continue.

Indeed, cannot one already note month by month how the American Scene pieces in the magazine increasingly reflect the impress of Jewish tradition and heritage upon American Jews? [The two sketches in this issue, for examples—"In Tails, Tallis, and Tachrichim" by S. T. Hecht, and "Making the American Shabbos" by Grace Goldin.] For all their differences of theme and tone, don't these pieces, in their various ways, reveal how amazingly the complex, intimate, and infinitely diverse relations of Jews to their code and faith still persist, despite alterations, in their daily life in free America? [If one would trace the stubborn strain, in some of its

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various flowerings, compare the two contemporary American sketches just cited with other pieces in this same issue, set in differing places and time—"Sayings of the Fathers," "The King, the Bishop, and the Jew," "The Interviewer at Work," and "The Heart of a Chauffeur."]

Perhaps the "old rabbinic conditioning," to use Professor Erwin Goodenough's fine phrase, is the hardiest of all perennials—whatever the soil and in whatever new "religious" or/and "secular" hybrid. So our forefathers thought—and so more than a few of the neighbors testify. A mystery? No, and yes. . . . Like all human life. . . . After all, is not Jewish experience purported to be human history's favorite mirror, symbol, and paradigm?

But this brings us to still another last word. Why are these "Jewish" pieces so "American"?—this question has been asked with speculative wonder by a hundred COMMENTARY readers, Jewish and non-Jewish. Why am I reminded of my Congregationalist grandfather, my mother's eccentric cousin who runs a filling station in Tennessee, my very Italian mother? Well, maybe the old saying will help us: the Jews are like everybody else—only more so. This need never have been such a paradox—for haven't we found, the common belief to the contrary, that to be most individual is to be most representative? Is not the commonest element shared by all common men the fact of difference? So it is, we venture to say, that most of the paradoxes about "the Jew" apply to all people, and especially to "the American," who is always something else besides American, whose very Americanness perhaps consists in being something else—Jew, Catholic, Italian, Negro, Irishman, Pole, white native Protestant, Puerto Rican, Mexican, Westchesterite, Texan, Baltimorean, Brooklynite—"and proud of it."

It is all of this, and much else, that makes the sum of these states and its peoples add up to the richest country in the world to live in (and to write about)—and in every sense that the word "rich" has meaning.

And it is only the beginning. For over this land, too, whether by the accidents or the predestinations of history, there hovers that extra dimension, a sense however dim of some high promise that keeps this "most materialist nation on the globe," as more than one has called us, the most conscience-ridden of all.

Jews, we said earlier, traditionally feel that they live under a covenant. What if—suddenly it occurs to us—it is the fate of American Jews to live under a double covenant, our ancient one and that which we feel crystallizing in the American firmament? Awful thought! But need a double covenant be a double burden—may it not prove a double blessing, not only for the lot of us, but for lots of others?

—ELLIOT E. COHEN

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FROM THE AMERICAN SCENE

IN TAILS, TALLIS, AND TACHRICHIM

. . . *Oh, Grave Thy Victory?*

S. T. HECHT

WHEN Jake Hammer died he sure made us trouble. Naturally, you'll ask how could Jake make trouble if he was dead? That's precisely the point.

Among our Jewish people, it appears, you shouldn't die in the summer, not if you don't want to make trouble. I was talking to Morris Teitelbaum from Newark, where they have *shuls* by the dozen and some even with two rabbis; but over there too, it seems, they've got the same sort of *tsores*. Of course when a *poor* man dies in the summer, the assistant rabbi takes over. But if one of the bigwigs, a Barney Rossman, heaven forbid, passes on and the senior rabbi, naturally, is away on vacation, God knows where—then you'll hear about it, I promise you. And so will the rabbi—on his return.

"How am I to know?" he will try to defend himself.

"For fifteen thousand a year," the cheeky one on the Board will tell him, "you are supposed to know!"

Compute the risks then of dying during the summer in a little burg with only one rabbi, then multiply by two for a *shtetl* like Reedville, N. J., where the best we can afford is a part-time rabbi. Plainly, in the summer is altogether a bad time for Jews to be dying. But there is something even worse, hazard unimaginable, so to speak, and that is to pass away during a summer weekend. In Reedville it's like dropping dead in a desert.

Just exactly when is a good time for Jews or anyone else to die, you can't ever be really sure. It's one of those things you put off as long as possible, like paying your shul dues and pledges. As for which day of the week is best, some say Friday night; some say Saturday. Those in the know maintain that during Yom Kippur is the *ne plus ultra* of all occasions, especially after Kol Nidre. Not only is this the high dramatic moment in the whole Jewish religious calendar—it'll prove, besides, that at heart you were truly a saint, the slander and backbiting of your fellow committee members to the contrary notwithstanding.

Somebody told me a story—while I'm on this subject of dying—and of course I can't be held for its authenticity, but I'll tell it to prove why *der Ribono Shel Olom* never lets us have advance notification, like the old-time landlord, that we must move; or why He even as much as doesn't ask us if we're ready to make the great leap. Quietly, deceitfully, comes the *Malechhamoves*—the Angel of Death. Forefinger in slow motion, he whispers, "Come along, brother!" and

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WHEN a rich Jew chooses to die in the middle of the summer with the rabbi away on vacation, when this final discourtesy crowns a whole career of estrangement from the Jewish community, and when the local church, to which the dead man had vaguely assimilated himself, suggests delicately that his bones might rest more easily in the Jewish cemetery—then you've got problems. This is the third of S. T. HECHT's explorations of the manners and mores of the Jews of "Reedville"; his earlier pieces were: "Seven Men in Search of a Rabbi" (June 1952) and "Mr. Big Moves to Greener Pastures" (September 1952). Mr. Hecht was born in Poland in 1895, came to this country in 1906, and is now a high school teacher in Newark, New Jersey.

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that's that! Which reminds me of my grandmother who was raised in Poland in a small village where all sorts of old wives' tales went the rounds from generation to generation. She had been given a full description of the Angel of Death so she might know him when he came, as if that mattered. What matters is, that disguise yourself as you please, *he* somehow or other always knows *you*.

MY GRANDMA, Chaye Sarah, was prepared, as all pious Jews should be, with the full meaning of her Hebrew names so she'd be all set to answer when they asked her about them as she lay in her grave. If you couldn't—brother, you just lie there, *neshome* and all, body and soul, hearing the wind, the rain trickling through, hearing the joy of released souls who knew the meaning of their names, while *ay, ay, ay! Oyf alle reshoim gezogt*. Let all sinners molder thus! One night, still a girl, my grandma was startled from her sleep. Seeing a dark figure in motion across the room, she screamed "*Shema Yisroel!*"—but it was only her father crossing the earthen floor toward the pan that reposed smack in the middle of the sleeping room.

The story I meant to tell you—not about Jake Hammer yet—concerns a man in Glogov, where my people come from, and, *oyf alle Yiden gezogt*—may we all be equally blessed—who attained to the unbelievable age of one hundred and fifty. One couldn't say that he never had been ill. He suffered all the frailties and diseases common to mankind, but somehow he always recovered. Even the doctors from the big city were perplexed. "How is it possible?" they marveled. But the old man refused to enlighten them. However, the Glogover rabbi, one Saturday afternoon with his Hasidim in the *Besmedrash*, revealed to them the secret in just above a whisper. The Angel of Death, says he, was never known to snuff out the light in a Jewish soul while at prayer. "If you feel yourself slipping," confided this saintly character, "just keep on reciting the Psalms." Unfortunately it's not the fashion any longer among our Jews to repeat the Psalms, but it may serve to explain why in my father's *kleysel* on Ridge Street you always saw the oldsters doing nothing else. Day and night, in their *yarmelkes*, right hands supporting their furrowed brows, their beards in steady rhythm, heads gently in motion, they sat by the hour, and over and over in the holy tongue, I can still hear them reciting *Tillim*.

I guess that was the trouble with Jake Hammer. He didn't know the Psalms.

To be sure, it wasn't only the Psalms Jake Hammer was ignorant of. There were lots of other things about our Jewish religion and our way of life that he didn't know. He was altogether mixed up. Don't please say *nebach!* I implore you not to waste your sympathies on the guy. I've been told that one time he joined the Presbyterian Church in Reedville—right here mind you, in our own town! Jake Hammer was a fool and doesn't merit under any circumstances the honest, innocent sympathies of a Jewish heart. Just why he joined and a few years later "unjoined" them, I've not found out. But I can guess. *Honig hot er dort nit gelekt!* Honey on his wafers they surely didn't serve him. Even Greenspan, to whom I owe much of this tale, had none other than the usual explanation: *hot gevolt antloyfen*—he wanted to make his getaway. But where to?

"Mit Jake Hammer," said Greenspan, "was very funny."

JAKE died in a hot July, and almost instantly our community was set by the ears trying to decide if he was fit to be given a Jewish burial.

When he heard the news, Mr. Benny Itzkowitz—if you don't remember him I can tell you that Mrs. Greenspan once confidentially told me he was a "pillow from the synagogue"—Itzkowitz at once declared outright: "Hammer ain't no Jew!"

Now unless one adheres to the dictum that "Once an Englishman always an Englishman," Jake Hammer really had a hard time qualifying as a Jew. Naturally, those who had eased up on their own observances championed Jake's cause. But the Orthodox wanted none of him! And that's where, as I said, Jake Hammer made us the trouble.

It was summer and our part-time rabbi, poor fellow, always had to take a job in one Jewish camp or another where, believe me, some kids get all the Jewishness they'll ever have. Reedville in the summer, to all intents and purposes, returns to its early Christian purity, what with the Jews at the

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beaches or the mountains. The storekeepers, *nebach,* they remain behind and sweat it out. A *minyan* for Friday night the rabbi never gets even during winter, but during summer, if you're unfortunate enough to have to say Kaddish, you'll either go around collecting ten men by hand so to speak, or you've got to rise with the rooster and make the pilgrimage to Passaic where in a little basement, my friend, you will find collected the aged worthies—sleep they can't anyway—in *tallis un tefilin,* and if you've got an eye and just a fraction of a memory it'll all come back to you.

"Ay, ay, ay," you'll be saying to yourself. "What am I doin' here?" and the distance you've still got to travel back to your Judaism—you who have been believing you're already returned—will become painfully plain. "Is this it?" you'll ask yourself, like coming on a wife you deserted some twenty years ago; and the whole problem of Orthodoxy vs. Reform vs. nothing will smack you in the face while your body, out of habit, like in swimming, will assume the old rhythm. Your lips will speak the prayers. If you knew how to *daven,* it'll come back to you. The sight of the Hebrew will singe you.

One man I knew—at just such a point as this—took flight. At his nephew's Bar Mitzvah they were going to call him up to the Torah, and the thought of getting up there, taking the corner of the tallis, and touching the parchment, so ancient, so yellow, and bringing the tallis to his lips, revolted him. "Not me!" he cried and bolted out the door. But if you're something like me, alack, you'll say, *"Kodesh, kodesh, kodesh*—holy, holy, holy," and rise three times to your toes, and you'll back up a few steps toward the close of the *Shmoyne Esrey* and you'll be wondering at yourself, at the pliability of the human soul as it is ricocheted against the close walls of the little *kleysel* in Passaic here, so early in the morning with Jews whom you never saw before. How wise of our rabbis to have instituted the saying of Kaddish for the dead for twelve months, and *Yizkor* four times a year.

How else would you remember them? It's like singing Swanee River or Santa Lucia, the songs you heard and learned as a child in school. So with our prayers. . . . Take me back . . . and on your way back to Reedville, still early, on the train . . . take me back . . . take me back . . . you'll be wondering maybe you've gone soft on all this old religious stuff, and then again, maybe you've not. . . . What else have you got that's genuinely you? A Christian service? The Gregorian chants? Look it up! They swiped every bit of it, the *goyim,* kit and kaboodle. Like me, maybe you'll go soft too, and you'll even forgive your Reedville merchants for not wanting to get up six in the morning or to gather round you late at night after a day in the store, hot and steamy, after the cash is counted, the doors locked, the safe with an electric light burning for the night, and the burglar alarm ready to scream. After such a day why should they want to come and say Kaddish with you?

MRS. HAMMER, I've been told, first called up the Presbyterian minister, but he quickly disabused her of her notions, not rudely if you please, but tactfully you understand, so she was able to put two and two together and realize for the first time in her namby-pamby neither-Jewish-nor-Christian existence, that not being baptized, her Jake wasn't exactly kosher merchandise for a church burial. "It would be much more appropriate, Mrs. Hammer, if Mr. Hammer were interred as a Jew." My mother would have said, *"Noch'n toyt iz er goveren a Yid."* After his demise Jake became a Jew.

First indications were that nobody would take Jake—truly, A Man Without a Cemetery. We, officially Orthodox, not only lacked a rabbi to do the honors. There were those among us—plenty—who didn't feel that Jake would exactly constitute an ornament to our *Bes Oylem.* His monument, to be sure, would be big enough. It would jut out in our modest cemetery, rise and declare itself like the Obelisk in Central Park. But during his life, I have been given to understand, he in no way identified himself with our people. I've also been told that he was ashamed of our Reedville Jews.

"Tell me!" Itzkowitz clamored. "Tell me from at least two *mitzvahs* what he done, and I'll say is all right he shall lay in our cemetery."

Behold zealotry forgetful of the goodness of God! Our father Abraham, pleading for the city of Sodom, might have saved it had he been able to produce *one* good man.

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Itzkowitz wanted two mitzvahs. Never had Hammer given a cent to Jewish charities, not until our veterans in the UJA Year of Destiny campaign flushed him from the thicket and somehow extracted twenty-five bucks from his hide. As "Colonel" Abe Klein remarked at the time: *"A hor fun a chazer is oych gut."* Even a bristle from a pig is something gained.

Jake Hammer lived alone with his wife in a very nice white house in a very exclusive part of Reedville. His lawn was long and wide, and the house itself sat well back behind a wall of tall rhododendron. What he did with his wife alone there, none of us could figure out. A sort of mysterious character, whom the old-timers among our Jews in Reedville had long ago given up. He was reputed to have had some sort of business in New York, just what, nobody knows. By the time I arrived on the Reedville scene he was already retired, white-haired, quite dignified, walking once as I saw him when he was pointed out to me, with his large head, stooped shoulders, all alone on the lawn toward evening before the mosquitoes begin their nightly blood collection for their own boys in the service. Charlie Parker, one of my *goyishe* buddies, pointing him out, said, "Waxy, there goes one of your lost brethren," and he gave me a fill-in on Jake Hammer. "You should try to bring him back to the tabernacle. Do him good!"

In his cellar Jake had a valuable collection of shaving mugs and tonsorial bottles which he kept in a showcase built for the purpose, with doors that locked to make it easy shipping to exhibitions. He also prided himself on his library of Americana over which he made a great to-do but never read. His ambition, as I have learned from sources other than Greenspan, was to make himself acceptable to the goyim. He gave to the Boy Scouts of America, to Father Flanagan's Boys' Town, to the Red Cross, and during his brief marriage to the Presbyterian Church he made more than tolerable contributions to the church itself, to their missions, and toward a fund for a new parish house they were hoping to erect. He must have once thought to buy his way in.

After Jake Hammer's death our Reedville library held quite an exhibition of his books. The Reedville *Republican Sentinel* reported the event in proper spirit, but never a word about his former flirtations with Presbyterianism. So he lived, quietly, mysteriously, a lonesome figure of a man who, as he aged, perhaps had felt he had made some blunders and that the best way out was to keep behind his trees and bushes. His one son, Michael, married a *shiksa*, of course, changed his name to Hammond, and through his wife succeeded where his father failed and was safely brought to Jesus. I'm not in the least interested in trying to make this a horrendous tale of a Jew and the "price he paid." In a manner of speaking I feel very sorry for the poor devil, but what I cannot forgive him is the way he spent his money. Not that I'm especially indignant that he gave charity only to non-Jewish causes. Worse, I'm told that he would spend three hundred dollars for a lousy shaving mug, and you couldn't even drink tea from it!

Mrs. Hammer was, I guess, the villain in the piece. She was devilishly eager to become a member of the Reedville Women's Club, and as it's said about a camel and the eye of a needle, that's how much chance there ever has been for a Jewess to elbow herself into that outfit. My own home isn't far from their club and I'll have to allow it's a darned nice-looking piece of real estate, but the dames I see rolling up to its doors, for my money you can put 'em in one barrel and make pickled snobs from the whole lot of 'em. Mrs. Adelaide Waller, who belongs to that choice group and whom my wife and I got to know by buying through Reedville's Co-op, swears that the women are the stupidest lot of stuffed brassieres you ever saw in a mirror or elsewhere.

Mrs. Hammer, according to her, was under the delusion that Gentile social doors would fly open once she and Jake joined the fanciest church in town. "You know the pay-off," Mrs. Waller said to us a year after Jake died. "The Women's Club wanted to make some money. They read in the *Sentinel* about Jake's having those shaving mugs and pretty bottles, so they wrote to Mrs. Hammer asking would she please lend them to be exhibited at the club for a charitable purpose. *And the damn fool did it!*" It must have been quite a come-down for her to discover that joining the church didn't automatically bestow membership in the Women's Club. Poor Mrs. Hammer!

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THAT July day Jake died—he said he was tired, went to lie down on a sofa, and poof! *oys* Jake. He was gone! Mrs. Hammer called Reverend Sutton whose hand she had shaken on Sundays as he stood in the shadowed and venerable entrance to our Presbyterian Church, and he, as I've said, had to let her down gently. Miserable critter! She thought she was through with us. Go tell her that hard as it is to be a Jew, it is even harder to quit being one. When you're alive, brother, you can ramble as you darn please, but after you're a goner, my boy, that's when you come home again—like it or not.

"What am I to do?" she quavered. The doctor, of course, wrote the necessary certification, but that's only the beginning. If you've been lucky enough thus far never to have to go through the agony of "arranging things," let me advise you right off—join whatever is necessary, even our little Ahavath Israel, superior as you may feel to it. It pays.

Speaks now Mr. Greenspan in his own particular way: "Rings the telephone one morning when is very hot the weather, and says a voice from which I never before heard and is asking, 'Is this Mr. Greenspan?' I say yes, and is a voman's voice which I still don't recognize and is saying, 'Mr. Greenspan, this is Mrs. Hammer.' 'What can I do, mam?' I say, and she says, 'Is dead Mr. Hammer.' In a minute I remember, and I say how sorry I am from the sad news. Sad I wasn't, but glad I wasn't neither. After all, is a human being, why should I be glad he dies? True, he didn't do us no good, but harm he didn't do us neither. 'I'm needing help,' she says, and is crying the voman. Is a funny thing mit people, Mr. Waxman. For years they lives in a community and never pays a cent to a shul or church, but comes time when they needing it, they expecting shall be there. Is coming to them! Right now is in town lots of young Jews mit children which don't pay nothing to the shul. Comes Yom Kippur they expecting seats which ain't members and they don't belonging to nothing. When grows up the boy needs to be Bar Mitzvah—step right in! But if we ain't having everything nice and ready for them, they is getting mad, turning up the nose and saying 'Such a dump!' We needing to keep up a cemetery for them, mit a shul, mit a rabbi, mit a cantor for the Holidays, *un alles oyf trombe*—all for peanuts!"

Our Reedville Ahavath Israel cemetery committee consisted of one man, whom Greenspan called up at once.

"Is Jake Hammer dead," he said to Leo Lifshitz.

"So what?" says Leo. "Is none of our business."

"Mrs. Hammer wants we shall bury him."

"Let her ask the priest from the Presbyterian Church."

"Listen, Leo. Is not I'm saying you wrong. But the voman is needing help. She wants a Jewish burial."

"*Nu!*" cried Leo. "*Di malachim tanzen in himel*—the angels rejoice on high. For twenty years he never give a penny to nothing and now we should bury him. The *chutzpah* of the rich! He didn't even buy no plot from us!"

Greenspan called Mrs. Hammer, explained that our rabbi was away on vacation—only a slight exaggeration—and incidentally informed her that we had no record of their ever having purchased a grave from us.

Her son, Michael, who had arrived by then, took over the telephone at this point and he asked Greenspan if there would be any objections to having his father removed to Finnegan's Funeral Home.

"You do mit him as you like," said Greenspan.

"Will a rabbi go there?"

Greenspan gave him the bitter truth. From a goyish funeral parlor no rabbi which has self-respect would walk in.

"Mine advice is you shall leave him where he is."

"Will you get us a rabbi to take care of everything?"

Greenspan, good soul, said he would try.

"But a plot on the cemetery you must first buy from us!"

NEWS travels fast in Reedville. Within the hour our Jewish merchants on Main Street were either pro-Hammer or anti-Hammer. But there was one detail on which they all saw eye to eye: the price of the plot was to cover some twenty years' dues to the synagogue, plus a rabbi's fee of a hundred, plus incidentals such as the cost of

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a coffin, a gratuity to the Chevre Kedishe—the Holy Brotherhood, usually consisting of some poor old Jews—for who else wants to wash a dead body, pare the nails, and otherwise set up the deceased for a proper audience with the King of Kings? For a nice round sum of a thousand dollars, it was agreed we would bury Jake Hammer and take care of all the arrangements.

"That's a holdup!" cried Michael Hammond to our Leo Lifshitz, who conveyed the message over the telephone.

"So don't buy from us!" Leo replied. Michael got the drift.

FINDING a rabbi wasn't easy.

Look high, look low. It's summer. Greenspan wanted a Reform rabbi, believing that would be most appropriate, but these gentlemen, as if in a body, had gone on vacation. Who knows? Maybe there was a conference in Cincinnati.

Itzkowitz, standing by and seeing how hard it was to find a man, bleated, "Meyer, you gotta find somebody!"

What a thousand dollars can do is nobody's business!

Speaking again Mr. Greenspan: "Mr. Waxman, I'm tellin' you was a terrible hot day, and already was late. At last I'm finding an Orthodox rabbi from way over in Dover, a place I never seen but which, thank God, has Jews mit a shul, and this rabbi is saying over the telephone that from such kind Jews like I'm describing to him, he ain't too happy to bury. So I say, 'Look, rabbi. *B'ris mile hot er.* He's circumcised. A Jewish voman for a wife, he's also got it.' But right there I gotta stop. I should tell him yet that Jake and Yosele Pandre were *pan bradt*—that Jake and the Church had embraced each other? That, mine friend, Greenspan wouldn't do for no money in the world. So I say, 'Rabbi, you got right, and is right too on such things you should take care. In shul he never went. From *kashrut* he didn't know. But he gave money to the UJA.' Wasn't a lie, was it, Mr. Waxman?"

Ah, that Mr. Greenspan, I'm sure he would have lied just the same for you, whoever you are, to get you a Jewish burial.

"Hollers the rabbi over the phone, 'And from this you calling a Jew?' So I plead, 'Rabbi, we already digged the grave, and is a coffin in the house from pine and not a nail in it. The Chevre Kedishe, is right now there. Please, you must come!'

"At last," continued Greenspan, while the store fan stirred the page of his Jewish *Forward* and we both sat, also on a warm day, quietly in the shadow of his lowered store awning and not a soul of a customer to disturb us. "At last he is saying yes. He is coming. Only must be done two things. Mr. Hammer is gotta be in *tachrichim*—a shroud—and must wear a *tallis kot'n*—a small praying shawl. A full-size tallis he wouldn't have around such a Jew. Of course I'm thinking might be better we shall wrap Jake in an extra large tallis so maybe the Devil will not see him and so will pass straight into heaven and fool God."

I interrupted to ask if that were possible.

"*Got opnaren ken men takeh nit*—God will not be deceived," he replied. "But *menshen*—people—yes. If some of them Elks seen Jake in a full-size tallis, maybe would laugh, maybe would faint!"

"What Elks?"

"Don't rush me," says he, for he was a man to take his time with a story. "The minute I hang up the telephone from the rabbi, I hurry up and call Gittleson, which is already in Mrs. Hammer's house and over there is already an argument between Mrs. Hammer—and who you think? Gittleson, of course!"

"In a full-dress suit," argued our worthy *shammes*, "is umpossible we shall do it."

"But, mister," weeps the bereaved creature, still dreaming of glory among the goyim. "My husband's brothers, the Elks, are coming."

"So let come the Elks! Is no Jew in a full-dress suit going to our *Bes Oylem*."

Michael Hammond stood apart from all this show of barbarity and superstition.

"Mother," he whispers, "why can't he be cremated?"

"No, no, Michael," she whispers back.

"Bah!" declared Michael, and then and there reaffirmed his resolution for an unbarbaric burial. After all, in his own home did he not have the finest advanced *objets d'art*, a piece of black African sculpture, for example, and enlargements of Mayan temples?

"So is yes or no?" Gittleson shot his ultimatum. He didn't fancy that whispering in his presence. Could be they was saying something about the Jews!

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The rest of the Chevre Kedishe, afraid of their shadows in this rich man's home, stood shy and timid, admiring our courageous but somewhat brazen *shammes*. If Barney Rossman couldn't bulldoze him, what chance had an elegant goy like Michael Hammond?

THE Elks arrived. Gittleson and his two assistants retired into another room, and Jake, who had been quickly readied by one of Finnegan's men, was exhibited to his brethren in proper attire. But the moment they left, in went Gittleson and renewed his arguments. The upshot was that Jake was taken out again, prepared according to Jewish ritual, and as a compromise, the boys laid him out once more in his full-dress suit, but on top of that they had slipped on his tachrichim and over that a tallis Gittleson had brought along. The old guy knew his business!

"Reminds me," said Greenspan, "of a story from Chelm. Was a man in Chelm and even he was rich, still he was a fool. He was so much wanting to show off, he is even wearing gold shoes. When was nice the weather, was all right, but in bad weather, in a small town which the streets isn't paved, is a *blotte*—mud, when it rains, and the rich man he don't like should be dirty the shoes. Still, he is wanting everybody shall see his gold shoes, even when is mud in town. So the shoemaker, which is just such a wise man like the other, makes a pair of shoes from wood so shall fit over the gold ones and is everything satisfactory. Now the gold shoes isn't getting dirty, not even in the *blotte*. Is only mit one trouble. Is nobody can see his gold shoes when it rains. So he goes back to the shoemaker, and what you think he done? He tells the man he shall drill holes in the wooden shoes so shall be seen the gold through the holes, and is happy now because he solves a big problem. Same with Jake Hammer. Underneath was the full-dress suit. If Mrs. Hammer was a smart woman she would put moths in the coffin they shall make holes in the tachrichim and the tallis."

I asked Mr. Greenspan if he attended the funeral.

"Was nothing to do anyway, and maybe by the cemetery which is open fields, I was thinking might be cooler, and is also a mitzvah. But this Orthodox rabbi—maybe you hear from him, a Mr. Wexler, he is a *shrayer*—a hollerer—and comes to make the prayers, he forgets where he is and who he is burying, and he hollers. And he shakes himself and screams the prayers so Mrs. Hammer is feeling ashamed, and I seen the look on the son's face, and I see he was thinking is like something from the tribal days. But Greenspan, he was thinking how was nice and cool on the cemetery, a high place and the heaven blue, so was possible to see New York.

"To tell you the truth, Mr. Waxman, I don't like *shrayers* myself and I don't go to Washington Cemetery in Brooklyn where is my mother, may she rest in peace, all on account from them *el mole rachemniks*—(cemetery weepers) who before the Holy Days, for a gratuity, will wail you a prayer enough to rouse the dead. Is true, Jewish funerals ain't nothing fancy like by the goyim mit flowers and dressing up the body so shall looking just like was alive and *ot, ot,* is getting up in three days. Not by the Jews, Mr. Waxman. We know that dead is dead. I'm not saying flowers ain't nice; but from what I seen already by the goyim, is better by us. By us we know the show is over, and is better not fool yourself."

"Who said Kaddish?"

"Who you think?" he asked, smiling.

"You?'

"That's right," said he. "And was well worth it, and also a mitzvah. Don't forget, Mr. Waxman, is a net nine hundred dollars mit change in the shul treasury from this little transaction, and for such money I'll say Kaddish every day."

We both broke into a loud laugh, bringing Mrs. Greenspan out of her retreat.

"From what you laughing?" asked she.

"*Mir lachen fun toyt,*" said he. "Death tickles our fancy."

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CEDARS OF LEBANON

SAYINGS OF THE FATHERS: CHAPTER I

Selections from the Pirke Aboth

On the long Sabbath afternoons of summer, it is customary to read in the synagogue a chapter of the Mishnah tractate popularly called *The Sayings of the Fathers* (*Pirke Aboth*). Dating back to Talmudic times and the academy of Sura, this custom established *Aboth*, or *Fathers*, in the Jewish consciousness like no other section of the Mishnah or, indeed, the Talmud. And the reason for this is not difficult to find. *The Sayings of the Fathers* is in many ways a unique part of the Mishnah, that compilation of the oral tradition set down in its final form sometime near the end of the 2nd century of the Common Era by Judah the Holy, usually known as Rabbi.

Primarily, this uniqueness resides in its non-Halachic (non-legalistic) character. While all of the other tractates of the Mishnah are concerned with the detailed exposition of scriptural and rabbinic commandments and prohibitions, *Aboth* is a fascinating collection of sayings and aphorisms throbbing with moral concern. By retaining the strict conciseness of expression characteristic of the legal portions of the Mishnah, *Aboth* succeeds in combining this quality with a living moral dynamism powerful in its tone. In its pages the rabbis of the Mishnah stand revealed as personalities of the highest religious and ethical sensitivity, dispelling in advance their representation as legalists of a "dead" morality.

The procedure of *Aboth* is, in one sense, haphazard. It does not attempt to give a systematic basis for the ethical life. Instead, it connects individual figures with sayings which it attributes to them. These sayings have the stamp of individuality about them, as if they were the insights resulting from lives lived in sanctity and the study of the Torah. But neither is their arrangement completely without order. In the first chapter especially, comprising the selection printed below, there is stressed the continuity of tradition. Rooted in the divine revelation of Sinai, the tradition passes through Moses to Joshua, from him to the elders, who in turn transmit it to the prophets until it comes to the Men of the Great Assembly who contribute the first of the sayings in *Aboth*. From there the tradition passes from teacher to pupil, each contributing his own insight and wisdom to the material at hand. The diversity and individuality of the sayings is thus located in a tradition which unifies their individual contributions and permits reference to their authors as "Fathers" of the nation. The widespread popularity of these sayings at all epochs in Jewish history and their inclusion as an integral part of the prayer book testifies to their relevance to the lives of many generations of pious Jews.

The following selection is from the translation of the *Aboth* by the late Joseph H. Hertz, Chief Rabbi of the British Empire, which was published, together with his commentary and the Hebrew text, by Behrman House (New York, 1945).—Michael Wyschogrod

All Israel have a portion in the world to come; as it is said, And thy people shall be all righteous; they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified.

1. Moses received the Torah on Sinai, and handed it down to Joshua; Joshua to the elders; the elders to the prophets; and the prophets handed it down to the Men of the Great Assembly. They said three things: Be deliberate in judgment; raise up many disciples; and make a fence round the Torah.

2. Simon the Just was one of the last survivors of the Great Assembly. He used to say, Upon three things the world is based: upon the Torah, upon Divine service, and upon the practice of charity.

3. Antigonos of Socho received the tradition from Simon the Just. He used to say, Be not like servants who minister to their master upon the condition of receiving a re-

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ward; but be like servants who minister to their master without the condition of receiving a reward; and let the fear of Heaven be upon you.

4. José, the son of Yoezer, of Zeredah, and José, the son of Yochanan, of Jerusalem, received the tradition from the preceding. José, the son of Yoezer, of Zeredah, said, Let thy house be a meeting house for the wise; sit amidst the dust of their feet; and drink in their words with thirst.

5. José, the son of Yochanan, of Jerusalem, said, Let thy house be open wide; let the poor be members of thy household and engage not in much gossip with women. This applies even to one's own wife; how much more then to the wife of one's neighbor. Hence the sages say, Whoso engages in much gossip with women brings evil upon himself, neglects the study of the Torah, and will in the end inherit Gehinnom.

6. Joshua, the son of Perachyah, and Nittai, the Arbelite, received the tradition from the preceding. Joshua, the son of Perachyah, said, Provide thyself a teacher; get thee a companion; and judge all men charitably.

7. Nittai, the Arbelite, said, Keep thee far from a bad neighbor; associate not with the wicked; and abandon not the belief in retribution.

8. Judah, the son of Tabbai, and Simeon, the son of Shatach, received the tradition from the preceding. Judah, the son of Tabbai, said, (In the judge's office) act not the counsel's part; when the parties to a suit are standing before thee, let them both be regarded by thee as wicked; but when they are departed from thy presence, regard them both as innocent, the verdict having been acquiesced in by them.

9. Simeon, the son of Shatach, said, Be very searching in the examination of witnesses, and be heedful of thy words, lest through them they learn to falsify.

10. Shemayah and Avtalyon received the tradition from the preceding. Shemayah said, Love work; hate lordship; and seek no intimacy with the ruling power.

11. Avtalyon said, Ye sages, be heedful of your words, lest ye incur the penalty of exile and be exiled to a place of evil waters, and the disciples who come after you drink thereof and die, and the Heavenly Name be profaned.

12. Hillel and Shammai received the tradition from the preceding. Hillel said, Be of the disciples of Aaron, loving peace and pursuing peace, loving thy fellow creatures, and drawing them near to the Torah.

13. He used to say, A name made great is a name destroyed; he who does not increase his knowledge, decreases it; and he who does not study, deserves to die; and he who makes a worldly use of the crown (of the Torah) shall pass away.

14. He used to say, If I am not for myself, who will be for me? And if I am only for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?

15. Shammai said, Fix a period for thy study of the Torah; say little and do much; and receive all men with a cheerful countenance.

16. Rabban Gamaliel said, Provide thyself a teacher; be quit of doubt; and accustom not thyself to give tithes by a conjectural estimate.

17. Simeon, his son, said, All my days I have grown up among the wise, and I have found nought of better service than silence; not learning but doing is the chief thing; and whoso is profuse of words causes sin.

18. Rabban Simeon, the son of Gamaliel, said, By three things is the world preserved: by truth, by judgment, and by peace; as it is said, Judge ye the truth and the judgment of peace in your gates.

Rabbi Chananya, the son of Akashya, said, The Holy One, blessed be he, was pleased to make Israel worthy; wherefore he gave them a copious Torah and many commandments; as it is said, It pleased the Lord, for his righteousness' sake, to magnify the Torah and make it honorable.

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ON THE HORIZON

The Highbrow Know-Nothings

STEVEN MARCUS

WYNDHAM LEWIS's *The Revenge for Love*, written in 1937 and now published in this country for the first time, is a satirical exposure of Stalinist society in England at the time of the Spanish Civil War. Its virtues are numerous. Lewis shows a remarkably clear grasp of the consequences of the Communist ideology, its appeal, the personal motives that press for its embrace, the pretentious stupidity, neurotic extravagances, and ideological viciousness it fosters. He recognizes that sense of ubiquitous crisis which so often impells and obsesses the Stalinist and the rationalistic liberal: "They only seemed to get really happy when they proved up to the hilt that everything was as hopeless as anything and you might as well go lie down and die." He knows too that "false politics, of sham-underdogs athirst for power—which treated the real poor, when they were encountered, with such overweening contempt, and even derision." In fact, he knows—and presents with a large and genuine intelligence—almost everything we have learned about Stalinism and, even more important, the Stalinist personality. When his publisher writes on the dust-jacket, "The incredible thing . . . is that such a book could have been written in 1937," one may wince at the complacency of "incredible," but one must grant the point.

YET, as time passes, more and more people keep turning up who knew the truth about Communism earlier and earlier. Mr. Lewis is entitled to much credit for having been wiser in 1937 than so many others. But his novel is concerned, not with the *fact* that the Communist movement is evil, but with the cultural, moral, and personal consequences of that fact, and we must ask of such a novel something more than the virtue of not having been duped. From what higher cultural level does Mr. Lewis survey the low chicaneries and vulgarities of Stalinism?

We notice at once that his book is constructed without care and written without taste. Pigeons fly "to receive the coolness of the evening breezes into their overheated wing-pits"; a mouth is an "eating-hole"; "a gastronomic hiss" describes the smell of garlic; "transatlantic sex-ethics"; "massive coquetry"; "an appreciable accretion of seconds"; "the red beef of the lower gum"; and the adjective "Homeric" used whenever the writer wishes to evoke the sense of dimension and energy—these examples are taken merely from the first twenty-five pages. Lewis also loves the longest, most latinate words he can find, even if he doesn't know how to use them. His style is not only tasteless, it is actively vulgar and philistine, and reveals essential qualities of the writer's mind that are coarse and unintelligent. We can no longer believe of Lewis, as we can no longer believe of Ezra Pound, that his consistent failures of taste and perception are accidental to some important, though undiscovered, achievement; they are symptomatic of his mind and of its commitment.

Those characters in the novel who stand

"ON THE HORIZON" this month offers two short articles. STEVEN MARCUS, discussing Wyndham Lewis's novel *The Revenge for Love* (Regnery; 341 pp., $3.50), considers the predicament of those writers who in their revolt against provinciality and "barbarousness" in modern culture have themselves been led to embrace the worst elements of the culture they excoriate; CHEMJO VINAVER reports on the choral music of Israel, telling how Israel's intensely self-conscious desire to create a high culture has led in many ways to a disregard for the slow processes of growth which alone can produce sweet fruit.

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in opposition to the Stalinists offer a good view of this commitment. Victor Stamp, a second-rate artist, swallows no ideology; he walks "with that lazy swagger that distinguishes the men of the Great Open Spaces of Anglo-Saxony." His "broad and hostile shoulders belonged to Nature with her big impulsive responses, with her animal directness. . . ." Not indifferent to ideas alone, he is insensitive to everything else, and finally to himself. Jack Cruze, a prurient tax-accountant, a satyr, handy with his fists, comes in for Lewis's approbation too; the author's apparent joy in his description of Cruze beating up Percy Hardcaster, his fists working "like deadly hammers of gum-elastic," is characteristic of what he admires: his hero is the "bushranger," the tough, mindless animal.

It is this adulation of the indifferent, the brutal, and the stupid—much more than his incidental remarks about Jews, Negroes, and "dagos"—that takes the edge off Lewis's satire. For his dislike of Communism is not prompted by an impulse toward something more decisive or humane; he hates Communism for the same reasons that he has contempt for any organization of people, and for most conscientious individuals: because organizations and conscientious individuals imply, in their very existence, efforts of the intellect, attempts at thinking, at making things consistent. Lewis's polemics against abstract ideologies become, at bottom, a rejection of ideas in general; his chief impulse is towards those infantile tantrums which come from realizing that one's own wishes do not totally control reality.

In this excessive indulgence of the undisciplined expression of his own personality, Lewis belongs with certain other modern writers—Ezra Pound, Henry Miller, Louis-Ferdinand Céline, Robinson Jeffers, and even T. S. Eliot—who have been treated with an astonishing critical leniency that has permitted each to become the center of a cult. All these men are acutely sensitive to the vulgarity and barbarism of modern life, and feel deeply the inroads made by mass culture into the world of intellect. Yet, except for Eliot, they have reacted to this vulgarity and brutality by becoming, in their critical attacks on modern sociey, vulgar and brutal themselves. Permitting their often justified aggressive impulses to simplify their criticism of the world to the point where it invariably assumes the qualities they so abhor, they commit the one practically irredeemable error in the world of intellect: confusing literature and politics. Surely the relation between the two is close, but it is not absolute. The difference is in the nature of the demand that each makes upon the discriminating powers of the mind, and it is at this point that these writers have failed, introducing literary categories into politics and corrupting their literary sensibilities with the unsubtle slogans of political action.

Pound and Miller are perhaps the two best examples of writers who have been neglected by serious criticism and whose very deficiencies, left almost unnoticed, have stimulated the intellectually gullible, the *parvenus* of literature, to form cults around them. To my knowledge F. R. Leavis is the only critic who has troubled to show (first in the early 30's, again in a recent review of Pound's *Letters*) how hopelessly inadequate Pound's notions of poetry, language, and literary tradition really are. And who has said that the famous *Cantos* are, almost entirely, a dull and boring poem, practically childish in emotional tone? As Lewis has petulantly revenged himself upon ideas, Pound has got even with the English language. The *Cantos* make no real demand—linguistically or intellectually. If one gets a few friends to decipher the scraps of foreign languages—and discovers how small Pound's range in them is—one finds only the same old repetitious cant about money, the Jews, poetry, etc., etc. This man who was supposed to love language better than anyone of his age has done it the greatest disservice, for the *Cantos* do as much to minimize the range of communication as any poem can possibly do. And it is hardly surprising that the "greatness" of Pound's poetry should be offered in extenuation of the viciousness of his ideas, for what Pound's cult finds attractive in his poetry is precisely the kind of childish, irresponsible dabbling that produced his ideas.

As for Miller, two things are said about him: that he is a great artist and a great writer about sex. Yet Miller, like Lewis and Pound, has written almost nothing that does not show on every page the marks of haste, arrogant carelessness, and simple linguistic barbarism. He is one of the most consistent-

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ly prolix writers in the history of literature; no Victorian novelist ever took half so long to describe a simple action as Miller does, and none of them made so much noise in doing it. And few know *less* about sex than Miller; he is the complete and untouchable innocent, ignorant of the pains, fears, or profound pleasures of sex, forever bursting with fantasies of anarchic, uncomplicated, "free" experience.

With T. S. Eliot, of course, we are on different ground. Unlike the others, whose "strongest points" are actually their weakest, Eliot's virtues are well-defined and concrete, and his attacks on modern society, even his expressions of anti-Semitism, are not accompanied by that pervasive vulgarity of thought and expression which is characteristic of Pound and Lewis, nor by the softness of style and profound verbosity of most of Miller or Jeffers. Eliot's anti-Semitism may be symptomatic of the more general limitations of his thought and culture, but it has been given only occasional expression, and that more on the level of ideas than emotion, and it does not seem to me infectious. In any case, it is not anti-Semitism *per se*, or any of the particular prejudices they allow themselves, that is so disturbing in these writers. What is disturbing is the underlying stupidity, the general irresponsibility of mind and conscience; if Ezra Pound were a lover of Jews, he would still be Ezra Pound. T. S. Eliot's achievement, if not independent of his anti-Semitism, is distinct from it. But it remains significant of the literary climate of our time that Eliot has never felt it necessary to retract or "explain" the things he has written about Jews.

CRITICISM, as practiced today, has failed us here. Granted that one cannot expect writers to respond to criticism as if it were purely disinterested advice, there is still reason to believe that critical attention will affect them, and in some cases persuade them. There is much to be said for the 19th century with its Lockharts and Jeffreys, often vicious, but feeling always that they had a stake in new writing, and with its controversies, often virulent, but offering plenty of expression for really differing ideas. There has been, for example, no adequate information given the reading public about Wyndham Lewis's own unparalleled career of intellectual irresponsibility, how he was within a short time sympathetic to fascism and Communism, how he has been anti-Negro, anti-Semitic, anti-intellectual, "anti" almost anything he could see. And now that in his latest book, *America and Cosmic Man*, he has come to embrace the modern world, he embraces it not for its true values, but precisely for its barbarousness and crudities.

Surely it is one of the tasks of criticism to make these things known. It has hardly done so. The literary cult is part of our lives, and we would not do away with it. Part of the critic's job is to make its existence difficult by not indulging the cultists in that sense of exclusive possession and secret appreciation upon which they flourish. A small cult does little for a writer; if anything it hardens him in his errors. Criticism's responsibility is the opposite; to open and expand, to let in the clear air. Its aim is still "disinterestedness." (It is also within the function of criticism to comment on the opportunism of a publisher who seeks to exploit such a book as *The Revenge for Love* for its "timeliness" when the minimum of reflection makes it clear that this "timeliness" is entirely specious.)

One would like to believe that if Lewis had received intelligent criticism earlier, his considerable talent would not have wasted itself so thoroughly. T. S. Eliot once wrote that "sensibility alters from generation to generation in everybody, whether we will or no; but expression is only altered by a man of genius." Wyndham Lewis is one of those unlucky writers who has apparently been waiting a long while for sensibility to catch up with him; and now, not only has it caught up with him—it has left him far behind. It is Lewis who must do the overtaking if any criticism of him is to be more than flogging a dead horse.

Israelis Singing in Chorus

CHEMJO VINAVER

THOUGH it has lately become fashionable to find fault with things in Israel, in the field of music it is still the accepted thing for the visitor to come, to listen, and—to praise. But perhaps I may claim exemption from the status of "visitor," for I gave concerts in Palestine long before

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it became Israel, and when I returned this past summer, I did so again to fulfill professional engagements rather than for sightseeing. Working for about three months with an Israeli choral group and pursuing other musical activities, I could not avoid direct exposure to the blessings—and curses—of musical life in Israel.

Choral music in Israel has not until recently been subjected to careful inspection. If one were to judge it by that first crop of choral recordings shipped to these shores—well, they did not serve to raise expectations. Nor did the "tradition" of adulation that prevails among well-meaning friends of Israel convince one of the "wonderfulness" of everything pertaining to Israeli song and singing. These reservations might have been expected to protect one from disappointment.

And yet, to one returning to the Israeli musical scene after a number of eventful years, the progress made in the development of a choral culture seemed far from satisfactory. As things stand, it will take more than time for the country to bring forth a choral body of impressive scope and artistic standards. And it is not a shortage of "raw materials," but rather an unfortunate lack of knowledge and training which blocks the road to higher achievement. The time has come to leave off the customary "praise and encouragement," so helpful to the beginner; at this stage, Israel's musical artists deserve the compliment of more demanding criticism. Given proper direction and impetus, it should be possible to raise the general level of choral activity, and to develop a choral instrument that would be no less representative of the country's choral culture than, for example, the Israel Philharmonic is in instrumental music.

Israeli choral singing I found sometimes stimulating, rarely inspired, and often downright maudlin. Most disheartening was the discovery that an unfortunate craving for publicity is in some quarters leading to an emphasis on quick results rather than on true achievement through hard work and perseverance; often this is coupled with a provincial adulation for "names" from the "outside." While this attitude seems to be most apparent in the cities—especially among organizers of musical activities and such—rather than in the rural settlements, it seems impossible to "localize" the tendency in the long run, for the cultural efforts of the kibbutzim depend to a large extent on guidance and administrative assistance from the cities.

The summer season of 1952 in Israeli music was devoted mainly to choral activities. In addition to the local "Kinnus," an annual gathering of the choral groups from the kibbutzim, there was scheduled the greatly anticipated "Zimriah," the first international Jewish choir festival on a supposedly impressive scale, for which choral bodies from several countries had been selected for participation. The Zimriah, as has remained no secret, did not turn out to be the expected tourists' attraction, nor was it a success from any other point of view. Of its musical merits, the less said, the better; what little cannot be entirely ignored will find mention later. The less ambitious Kinnus proved the more rewarding.

THE Kinnus took place this summer at Givath Brenner, a large settlement near Tel Aviv. It began at eight o'clock of a Saturday morning in July, and ended at midnight. The participants—about thirty choirs with a total membership of about one thousand—came almost entirely from the communal settlements. All these singers, and many of their leaders as well, are regular members of their kibbutzim, able to devote only their scanty hours of leisure to choral training—amateurs in the true sense of the term: people who love music for its own sake. Some more gifted, some less gifted, the trained and the untrained mixed together, but all of them, and this was evident throughout, devoted to their choir work. For one coming from New York, where Jewish choral concerts inevitably evoke the picture of somewhat aged people both onstage and in the hall, this gathering of enthusiastic young people was a refreshing experience.

Not quite so captivating were the musical presentations offered by these young people, if one is to judge them by serious musical standards—and how else should they be judged? This song festival, like others before it, bore out the truth of the saying that there are no good or bad choirs but only good or bad conductors. Among the conductors at the Kinnus, this one showed talent, another some knowledge; but one watched in vain for even one among them with all the qualities necessary for effec-

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tive choral leadership: general musicianship, command of choral technique, authority as a leader and communicative spirit, knowledge and ability to select a repertory, not to mention the finer points of interpretation, pitch, dynamics, blending, and the rest on that tedious list. Watching them all day long, three distinct types of conductors could be discerned: the "born" conductors—a very few, as usual; next, those not exactly "born" to be conductors, but capable of development under proper training; and lastly, those decidedly "born" *not* to become conductors—of these there were quite a few. Even among the better conductors, lack of training seemed the common trait. But sincere devotion and enthusiasm were evident in everything they undertook—yes, even in their worst musical "sins"—and it is this that makes one feel how much they need, and deserve, proper guidance and less "charitable" criticism.

Of the thirty choirs at the Kinnus, two were of special interest: a group composed of Yemenites and, at the other extreme, a chorus of Communists. These latter did not miss a chance to demonstrate their spiritual loyalty to the Soviet Union—to the extent of not including even a single number of Israeli music in their repertory. However, they showed up well against most of the other choirs: their vocal material was good and they were led by an able conductor. Indeed, there could be no doubt as to the conductor's command over the group: however, the stern precision with which he led his forces through excerpts of Prokofieff's "Alexander Nevsky" (which, incidentally, calling for orchestra and mass chorus, was not really suited to this small group) was more on the side of military rather than musical discipline, and did not make for enjoyable music.

OF AN entirely different character, and thoroughly enjoyable, was the performance of the Yemenite group, a chorus of sixteen voices, mostly women. The music, rendered in unison, with occasional percussions, revealed all the subtlety and skill that Yemenite musicians are capable of. An unobtrusive discipline united the singers with their leader, the young Yemenite Ovadia, whose improvising, rather casual style was eminently suited to the free-flowing Oriental rhythms of the music. A rare, almost haunting quality in the women's voices contributed greatly to the effect. One encounters this special timbre of the quasi-alto voice often among Yemenite women singers—it seems to be one of the intangible by-products of an ancient culture. (Western music-lovers have yet to hear a fair sample of this timbre, despite the recent minor "invasion" of Yemenite songstresses.)

The two selections on their program were most interesting specimens of Semitic-Oriental religious folk song, music of the early recitative character, rather archaic in style and sound. It is almost impossible to establish the exact age of such music as this, but it is not at all improbable that some of the music of the Yemenites antedates Gregorian or even Ambrosian chant. The flowing, broad melos of these songs is often interspersed with unexpected rhythmical melodies, changing the recitative flow into a crowded web of intricate rhythms; it is then that the singers make use of their percussion instruments, a sort of tambourine and castanets.

From a purely musical point of view, this Yemenite group was far more interesting than most of the more ambitious four-part choirs, some of which even boasted a "classical" repertory—often to the lesser glory of Bach and Handel. Nor was my admiration for the Yemenite musicians lessened by rumors that the jury had had grave doubts about allowing these "primitives" to share the stage with groups devoted to four-part singing.

THIS introduces the question of repertory, an eminently important problem for these choirs. At the Kinnus a conspicuous dearth of suitable repertory made itself felt, notwithstanding the fact that a special Music Division exists in the Cultural Department of the Histadrut, which provides its entire network of choirs with choral literature and sheet music. The pieces sung at the Kinnus were more often than not entirely unsuited to the range and capabilities of the performers. Moreover, the limitations of the available repertory led to incessant repetitions of the same pieces. The natural tendency to stress the familiar leads those of Western European background to emphasize the classical repertory, no matter if their choruses are up to its standards or not. Nobody will suspect me of advocating an exclusive diet of Israeli music; even if Israeli

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music were richer than it is, I should not favor this. Nor do I have to demonstrate my acceptance of the choral classics of any land or age. But nothing will convince me that shoddy performances of Bach and Handel, Schumann and Mendelssohn, will develop an appreciation of the masters. It *is* possible, however, to offer adequate performances of certain classical pieces—even with the vocal material at hand—if conductors will show the discrimination necessary in selection.

A tragi-comical illustration of the misguided ambition which blighted the Kinnus was provided by an incongruous performance of a chorus from Handel's "Judas Maccabaeus" by a Tel Aviv choir of Bulgarian immigrants. It was a double crime: against Handel and against this choir, which, considering its good vocal material, might have done very well with a less ambitious piece of music. As it was, the group's sole contribution consisted in unplanned amusement for those who remembered authoritative Handel performances.

Having said all this, it is fair to record that some choirs managed to do rather commendable work, and that some of the young leaders present may emerge as capable conductors. Although higher standards and better achievements must be aspired to, it is well to remember at this point that song festivals like this one are designed primarily for the stimulation of choral activities within the country, without too much artistic pretension. Thus, with all its shortcomings, the Kinnus certainly came closer to accomplishing its aims than did the ill-starred Zimriah, which took place a month later, in August.

For many reasons this premature undertaking was doomed to failure. As to the standards aspired to—that story was told already when we glanced at the list of participants "selected" from among New York's Jewish choral groups. Not quite so drab, though far from inspiring, were the participants from other countries: England, France, Belgium, Yugoslavia, Canada, and Israel. But the predominance of mediocrity among these Jewish choral groups was a shock—to audiences and critics alike. One of the Tel Aviv dailies dedicated a sarcastic article to the embarrassing event, another preferred to ignore it altogether. The much heralded festival became the butt of the jokesters, and for its duration an aroused *vox populi* made itself heard in Tel Aviv cafés and buses.

The Zimriah had begun with an inauspicious "overture" provided by choristers from abroad (who en route angrily protested against the travel accommodations provided for them). But—to dwell on the "artistic" aspects of the festival—what had prompted the importation of such low-caliber choirs as the New York groups remains a mystery. It is no secret that even at home these choirs serve musical functions pretty much limited to the activities of their sponsor organizations, and some of them barely fulfill these modest requirements. No wonders could be expected from them, though they did their best to prepare for the "great event" in Israel—some of them enriching their Hebrew and Yiddish repertory with Negro spirituals. No amount of true-to-style "handclapping" could make the renditions of these spirituals sound authentic. But let us hasten to "accentuate the positive," whatever there is of it.

There was one bright spot, although it was not contributed by any of the guest choirs. The best impression—as this listener goes—was made by a genuine Israeli product: an unpretentious chorus, composed of members from various kibbutzim, led by Yehuda Sharett. The young singers followed the demands of their leader with admirable devotion, producing a nice tone quality which seemed in spots surprisingly well-balanced. From the point of view of technique, Sharett's style of directing appears somewhat awkward, but he impresses one as a musician without guile or pretense—to the extent of not even attempting to hide his awkwardness. An asset worth more than technical proficiency is his sincerity, his devotion to music, and a relentless striving to make the best of his abilities. His choral compositions, though too often weighted down with counterpoint, are also rather engaging.

One bright spot. But for the sake of presenting this group, which may be heard any time in Israel, it was hardly necessary to convoke an elaborate Zimriah. And if a Zimriah there had to be this very summer, it might perhaps have paid to aspire to ideals higher than mere expediency—if only for the sake of expediency. The most dedicated concern for artistic values could hardly have proved less "popular" than this wasteful festival of the second-rate.

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THE STUDY OF MAN

THE INTERVIEWER AT WORK

Some Problems Posed by the Natives and the Terrain

I. L. PERETZ

POPULAR images are rarely entirely wrong; and if the mass media and the popular mind today see the social scientist as a man with pencil and pad in hand, buttonholing hapless citizens on the street, the error is not in the observation—it is only in seeing the social scientist as the interviewer himself rather than as the man who sits in an office poring over columns of figures, the end product for which the interviews provide the raw materials.

Today, no matter what the question put to the social scientist, he begins his answer by composing a questionnaire, which he then gets filled out by having an appropriate number of respondents interviewed. The census, the foundation of all social investigation, is itself the product of such a procedure. In more recent years, first psychologists, then sociologists, and now political scientists and economists, have turned to interviewing as the basic method for empirical social investigation. The public opinion poll has become the model for research in every field but archeology and history—and even in the latter field ingenious young scholars are doing their best today to break down the apparently impassable barrier presented to interviewing techniques by the fact that most of the respondents are dead.

It was not always so. Twenty-five years ago a leading American work on the methods of the social sciences devoted a dozen pages out of four hundred to questionnaires and interviews—and warned its readers not to take these techniques too seriously. But the virtues of the interview—the ease and simplicity with which it can be used, the way in which it opens every question to study, the fact that it makes possible the accumulation of so much data that advanced statistical methods can be used to interpret them, and the way in which it permits the employment of "unskilled labor" to a fairly large extent in social research—soon overrode all other considerations. The interview itself became the subject of manuals, studies, and monographs in America (one manual has been recently translated into German under the title *Das Interview*).

Now and then one heard it whispered that all was not well between interviewer and respondent—collusion, conscious and unconscious, misunderstanding, confusion were mentioned—but the structures built on interviews were nevertheless reared higher and higher. Today the whisper is a low roar, and the interviewer on whom so much depends is getting a thorough scientific going over—generally, of course, by interview, but on rare occasions also by direct observation of him at work. It is fair to say that some social scientists have been shaken by what they have seen. And yet interviews must inevitably be the basis of all empirical social science—how else conduct even something as simple as a census?

AS A contribution to these studies, we present below a report of the experiences of an early interviewer, I. L. Peretz, better known as the great Yiddish writer, the centenary of whose birth was celebrated all over the free world in 1952. In his "Travel Pictures," written toward the end of that last century, Peretz describes how, in that time of troubles for the Jews of Russia, he decided to go out to the villages like a scientist, as he tells us in his introduction, and find out just how the Jews there lived and just what they thought. He discovered—as American social scientists now engaged in asking questions throughout the world are discovering every day—that asking a question and getting an answer is not so simple a matter as it seems—particularly when dealing with a people among whom it is *de rigueur* to answer one question with another. Since he was a rather early interviewer, his report, and our excerpts, also include the less formal observations of the unprofessional sociologist of an earlier day.

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We are indebted to Professor S. M. Lipset of the Columbia University sociology department for calling this early venture into empirical sociology to our attention.

"The Interviewer at Work" (our title) is a series of excerpts from "Travel-Pictures," one section of the volume *Stories and Pictures* which the Jewish Publication Society of America first published in English in 1906. It is with the kind permission of the Jewish Publication Society that we reprint this revised version of their translation.—NATHAN GLAZER.

MY FIRST halting place was Tishevitz. I took lodgings with an acquaintance, Reb Boruch. He sent for the beadle and a few householders.

While I was waiting for them I stood by the window and looked out at the market place. It was a large square bounded on every side by a row of grimy, tumble-down houses, some roofed with straw, but the majority with shingle. All were one-storied and had broad porches supported by rotting beams.

Out in front of the porches, and with not too much room between them, stood huckstresses over stalls holding rolls, bread, peas, beans, and various kinds of fruit. The marketwomen are in a state of great commotion. I must have made a big impression on them.

"Bad luck to you!" screams one. "Don't point at him with your finger; he can see!"

"Hold your tongue!"

The women know that I have come to take down things in writing. They confide the secret to one another so softly that I overhear every word, even inside the house.

"They say it is *he* [Satan] himself!"

"It is a good thing the poor sheep have shepherds watching over them. All the same, if *that* Shepherd didn't help, much good it would do!"

"A person can't understand why *that* Shepherd should require such messengers" (an allusion to my shaven face and short-skirted coat). . . .

I BEGAN with mine host. He has no wife, and before I could put in a word he excused himself for it by asking, "How long do you suppose she's been dead?"—lest I should reproach him for not having found another to fill her place.

Well, to be brief, I set him down a widower, three sons married, one daughter married, two little boys and one little girl at home. And here he begs me at once to put down that all his sons—except the youngest, who is only four years old, "and Messiah will come before *he* is liable for military service"—are exempt from serving for one reason or another.

With the exception of the two eldest sons, I already know the whole family.

The married daughter lives in her father's house and sells tobacco, snuff, tea, and sugar; also foodstuffs; also I think, kerosene and grease. I had bought some sugar from her early that morning. She is about twenty-eight years old. A thin face, a long hooked nose that seems to be trying to count the black and decaying teeth in her half-opened mouth, cracked, blue-gray lips—the image of her father. Her sister, a young girl, is like her but she has *"kallacheyn,"* her face is fresher and pinker, her teeth whiter, and altogether she is not so worn and neglected looking. I also see the two little boys, pretty little boys, they must take after their mother: red cheeks, and shy, restless eyes, their tight black curls full of feathers. But they have ugly habits, are always shrugging their little shoulders and writhing peevishly. They wear quilted coats, dirty but in one piece.

The mother can't have died more than a short time ago, long enough for the coats to get dirty, not long enough for them to get torn. Who is there to look after them now? The eldest sister has four children, a husband who is a scholar, and the shop—the little *kalla* maiden waits on her father's customers at the bar; the father himself has no time.

"What business are you in?" I ask him.

"Percentage."

"Do you mean usury?"

"Well, call it usury if you want to. It doesn't amount to anything either way. Do you know what?" he exclaims. "Take all my rubbish and welcome, bills of exchange, deeds —everything for 25 per cent, only pay me in cash. I'll give up usury, even the public house! God knows how I'd love to go to Palestine—but give me the cash! Take the whole business and welcome! You think we live on usury—it lives on us! People don't pay up, the debt grows bigger. The bigger it gets, the less it's worth, and the poorer am I, I give you my word!"

Before going out to take further notes, I witness a little scene. While I was gathering

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up my things, paper, pencil, cigarettes, Reb Boruch was buttering bread for the children to take with them to *cheder*. They each had two slices of bread and butter and a tiny onion as a relish.

"Now go!" he says; he does not want them in the public house. But the little orphan isn't satisfied. He hunches his shoulders and pulls a wry face preparatory to crying. He feels a bit ashamed, however, to cry in front of me, and waits till I am gone. But he can't wait so long and lets out a wail:

"Another little onion!" he wants. "Mother always gave *me* two!"

The sister has come running into the taproom and catches up another onion and gives it to him. "Go!" says she also, but much more gently.

The mother's voice sounded in her words.

We go from house to house, from number to number. I can see for myself which houses are inhabited by Jews and which by Gentiles; I have only to look at the windows. Dingy windows are a sure sign of "Thou hast chosen us," still more so broken panes stuffed with cushions and sacking. On the other hand, flower pots and curtains show the presence of those who have no such right to poverty as the others.

One meets with exceptions—here lives, *not* a Jew, but a drunkard—and here again—flowers and curtains, but they read *Hazefirah*. [A Hebrew newspaper, to subscribe to which meant that one was "enlightened" and "advanced."] . . . And don't imagine Tishevitz is the world's end. It has a Maskil, too, and a real Maskil, one of the old style, middle-aged, uneducated and unread, without books, without even a newspaper, in a word a mere pretense at a Maskil. . . .

As I heard later, the Maskil took me for another Maskil, and was sure that I should lodge with him, or, at any rate, that he would be the first one on my list. "For work of that kind," he said to the others, "you want people with brains. What do you suppose he could do with the likes of *you*?"

And as the mountain did not go to Mohammed, because he had never heard of him, Mohammed went to the mountain. He found me in the house of a widow. He came in with the wicked child's question in the Haggadah: "What is all this to you?"

"*Moi panyiye!* What are you doing here?"

"How here?" I ask.

"Very likely you think I come from under the stove? That because a person lives in Tishevitz he isn't civilized, and doesn't know what is doing in the world? You remember: 'I have sojourned with Laban'? I do live here, but when there's a rat about I soon smell him out."

"If you can smell a rat, and know everything that's going on, why ask questions?"

The beadle pricked up his ears, and so did the half-dozen loungers who had dogged my steps. There was a fierce delight in their faces, and on their foreheads was written the verse: "Let the young men arise"—let us see two Maskilim have it out between them!

"What's the good of all this joking?" said the Maskil, irritated. "My tongue is not a shoe sole! And for whose benefit am I to speak? That of the Tishevitz donkeys? Look at the miserable creatures!"

I feel a certain embarrassment. I cannot very well spring to the defense of Tishevitz, because the Tishevitz worthies in the window and the doorway are smiling quite pleasantly.

"Come, tell me, what does it all mean, taking notes?"

"Statistics!"

"Statistic-shmistik! We've heard that before. What's the use of it?"

I explained—not exactly to him, but to the community, so that they should all have an idea of what statistics meant.

"Ha-ha-ha!" laughs the Maskil loudly and hoarsely. "You can get the Tishevitz donkeys to believe that, but not me! Why do you want to put down how a person lives, with a floor, without a floor! What does it matter to you if a person lives in a room without a floor? Ha?"

It matters, I tell him, because people want to show how poor the Jews are; they think—

"They think nothing of the kind," he interrupted. "But let that pass! Why should they want to know exactly how many boys and how many girls a man has? And what their ages are, and all the rest of the bother?"

"They suspect us of shirking military duty. The records, as of course you know, are not correct, and we want to prove—"

"Well, that may be so, for one thing—I'll allow that—but—about licenses! Why do you note down who has them—and what they are worth?"

"In order to prove that the Jews—"

But the Maskil won't let me finish my sentence.

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"A likely story! Meantime people will know that this one and the other pays less than he ought to for his license, and he'll never hear the last of it."

Hardly had he said this when the heads in the window disappeared; the beadle in the doorway took himself off, and the Maskil, who had really meant well all along, stood like one turned to stone.

The population had taken fright, and in another hour or two the town was full of me.

I was suspected of being an agent of the excise. And why not, indeed? The excise knew very well that a Jew would have less difficulty in getting behind other people's secrets.

I was left to pace the market square alone. . . .

I ARRIVED in Lyashtzof on a dark summer night, between eleven and twelve o'clock. Another market place, with different kinds of buildings and little walled-in houses round about.

In the middle of the market place, a collection of large, white stones. I drive nearer—the stones move and sprout horns; they become a herd of milk-white goats.

The goats show more sense than the community leaders of Tishevitz: they are not frightened. One or two of the whole lot lift their heads, look at us sleepily, and once more turn their attention to the scanty grass of the *gass*, and to scratching one another.

Happy goats! No one slanders you, *you* needn't be afraid of statisticians. It is true, people kill you, but what of that? Doesn't everyone die before his time? And as far as troubles go, you certainly have fewer. . . .

Early in the morning, before the arrival of the beadle, there come some Jews—they want to see the note-taker. My fame has preceded me.

I make a beginning, and turn to one of them: "Good morning, friend!"

"Good morning, *sholom aleichem*." He gives me his hand, quite lazily.

"What is your name, friend?"

"Levi Yitzchok."

"And your German [family] name?"

"Why do you want to know?"

"Well, is it a secret?"

"Secret or no secret, you may as well tell me why you want to know. I'll be bound *that's* no secret!"

"Then you don't know your German name?"

"Not exactly."

"Make a stab at it—just for fun!"

"Baerenpelz," he answers, a little ashamed.

"A wife?"

"*Ett*!"

"What does *ett* mean?"

"He wants a divorce!" another answers for him.

"How many children?"

He has to think, and counts on his fingers: "By the first wife—mine: one, two, three; hers: one, two. By the second wife. . . .

He gets tired of counting: "Let's say six!"

"'Let's say' is no good. I must know exactly."

"You see, 'exactly' is not so easy. 'Exactly!' Why do you want to know? *Vos iz*? Are you an official? Do they pay you for it? Will somebody follow and check your statements? 'Exactly!'"

"Tell him, blockhead, tell him," the rest encourage him. "Now you've begun, tell him!" They want to know what the next questions will be.

Once again he has counted on his fingers and, heaven be praised, there are three more: "Nine children, health and strength to them!"

"How many sons, how many daughters?"

He counts again: "Four sons and five daughters."

"How many sons and how many daughters married?"

"You want to know that, too? Look here, tell me why?"

"Tell him, then, tell him!" cry the rest, impatiently.

"Three daughters and two sons," answers someone for him.

"*Takeh*?" says the latter. "And Yisrolek?"

"But he isn't married yet."

"Horse! They call him up next Sabbath! What does a week and a half matter?"

I make a note and go on. "Have you served in the army?"

"I bought exemption from *Kohol* [local Jewish authorities], for four hundred rubles! Where should I find them now?" and he groans.

"And your sons?"

"The eldest has a swelling under his right eye, and besides—not of you be it said!—a rupture. He has been in three hospitals. It cost more than a wedding. They only just sent him home from the regiment! The second drew a high number. The third is serving his time now."

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"And the wife?"

"At home with me, of course. Why ask?"

"She might have been at *her* father's."

"A pauper!"

"Have you a house?"

"Have I a house!"

"Worth how much?"

"If it were in Samoscz, it would be worth something. Here it's not worth a *dreier*, except that I have a place to lay my head down in."

"Would you sell it for one hundred rubles?"

"The Lord help us! One's own inheritance! Not for three hundred."

"Would you sell it for five hundred?"

"*Meh!* I'd rent a place and go into business!"

"And what is your business now?"

"What business?"

"What do you live on?"

"*That's* what you mean! One just lives."

"On what?"

"God's providence. When He gives something one has it!"

"But He doesn't throw things down from heaven?"

"He does so! Can I tell how I live? Let's figure it out: I need a lot of money, at least four rubles a week. The house brings in, beside my own lodging, twelve rubles a year—nine go for taxes, five for repairs, leaves a hole in the pocket of two rubles a year! That's it."

He puts on airs: "Heaven be praised. I have no money. Neither I, nor any one of the Jews standing here, nor any other Jews—except perhaps the 'German' ones in the big towns. *We* have no money. I don't know any trade, my grandfather never sewed a shoe. So I live as God wills, and have lived so for fifty years. And if there is a child to be married we have a wedding and dance in the mud."

"Once and for all, what are you?"

"A Jew."

"What do you do all day?"

"I study, I pray—what else should a Jew do? And when I have eaten I go to the market."

"What do you do in the market?"

"What do I do? Whatever turns up. Well, yesterday, for example, I heard, as I passed, that Yoneh Borik wanted to buy three rams for a gentleman. Before daylight I was at the house of a second gentleman who had once said he had too many rams. I made an agreement with Yoneh Borik, and, heaven be praised, we made a ruble and a half by it."

"Are you then what is called a commission agent?"

"How should I know? Sometimes it even occurs to me to buy a bit of produce."

"Sometimes?"

"What do you mean by 'sometimes'? When I have a ruble I buy."

"And when not?"

"I get one."

"How?"

"What do you mean by 'how'?"

And it is an hour before I find out that Levi Yitzchok Baerenpelz is a bit of a rabbinical assistant, and acts as arbiter in quarrels; a bit of a commission agent, a fragment of a merchant, a morsel of a matchmaker, and now and again, when the fancy takes him, a messenger.

Thanks to all these "trades," the counted and the forgotten ones, he earns his bread, though with toil and trouble, for wife and child—even for the married daughter, because her father-in-law is *only* a pauper.

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LETTERS FROM READERS

"Freedom or Authority?"

To the Editor of Commentary:

I would like to express my views on Oscar Handlin's article, "Freedom or Authority in Group Life?" which appears in the December 1952 issue.

I recognize that history dramatized or baked over in a moral sauce is entertaining and stimulating, while an objective historical analysis usually ends up as dull reading. I do not know what sources Mr. Handlin may have consulted for his sketch of the historical background but there is little indication in the article that Mr. Handlin read any other than the official documents issued by the American Jewish Committee and the Anti-Defamation League for his information on the current National Community Relations Advisory Council problem. If he had studied only a small part of the voluminous material which is available on both sides of this controversy, he might not have been so positive about his premises nor would the issues appear to be as simple as he finds them to be.

It would seem to me that Handlin has used considerable literary license in dramatizing this issue as if it were a contest between the libertarians and freedom-lovers against "those impatient with the apparent disorder of spontaneous voluntary bodies"; those opposed to "secular control"; and those "holding nationalist sentiments" and the many others "propelled by a deep sense of insecurity." There are undoubtedly many of our contemporaries whose motives could be so described and who might believe that the NCRAC issues reflected their sentiments. Such sentiments, however, were not really the motives of most of the persons like myself who participated in the many meetings and discussions that preceded and followed the MacIver Study. Most of us who agree with Mr. Handlin on the nature of voluntary association and would be inclined to withdraw from any authoritarian or pseudo-authoritarian organization fail to see how all this is applicable to the current problem. We believe that those who disagree with us are confusing the problem of authority with the problem of function.

The major and gross defect of the article is that nowhere does it deal with the real issue —namely, the effectiveness of the work of the agencies. Mr. Handlin makes only one reference to it, when mentioning the work of the AJC and ADL as having been "remarkably effective." He says this is true because they can be flexible. But he gives not a particle of evidence to support this sweeping generalization.

In the same vein he dismisses the MacIver Study—which was at least a study, and not just a dissertation—as "arbitrary theoretical schemes of experts." This can hardly measure up to scholarly standards—and the dismissal of experts is strange coming from one who is no mean "expert" as a researcher. The views of communities are castigated as "unrealistic community schemes of ideological revolutionaries." That is so farfetched that one wonders what he is actually talking about.

Mr. Handlin would appear to be judging the NCRAC's action by comments in the Anglo-Jewish and Yiddish press. . . . That is a strange procedure. Would Mr. Handlin appraise the Roosevelt administration by the interpretations of the Chicago *Tribune* or the New York *Mirror* or the *Daily Worker* (when the Communists were supporting Roosevelt)?

Opinions about the nature of the controversy held by Mr. Handlin and by the American Jewish Committee are, I believe, based upon unfounded fears and misconceptions. The controversy did not really involve the attempt to establish "some kind of representative body that would speak for all Jews and impose discipline on them." It was not designed as "the first step in the creation of an authoritative body representative of American Jews." It did not seek "a large authoritative powerful body . . . a body strong enough to impose discipline within its own ranks and to stand up against the hostile forces outside them." Mr. Handlin has only to read the resolutions finally adopted by the NCRAC plenary session in September 1952 to recognize that he can discover no evidence for such statements in the actual decisions reached by the NCRAC.

There is no point in going into the history of the American Jewish Congress for 1917, or of the American Jewish Conference of 1943, as a basis for evaluating the proposals for improving the effectiveness of the NCRAC recom-

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mended by Dr. Robert MacIver. As a historian, Mr. Handlin knows all about the pitfalls of equating historical parallels to any new situation with all of the variables it must involve. The NCRAC is a going organization established in 1944 for the purposes of establishing cooperation among its member agencies and to help in the coordination of their activities. It could have been examined on its own record and merits. Mr. Handlin says "it is difficult to escape the conclusion that the proposed reconstitution of the NCRAC was the first step in another of the successive attempts to impose the terms of unity upon American Jews." I would say from my knowledge of the facts that I find it extremely easy to escape from such a conclusion.

I CAN accept fully Mr. Handlin's thesis of the nature of voluntary association and how it differs from official bodies. Voluntary associations are obviously voluntary in character and involve the right to dissent, withdrawal, secession. Four national Jewish organizations and twenty-seven local community-relations agencies have voluntarily consented to remain in the NCRAC on the revised basis for improving their efforts cooperatively. The American Jewish Committee and the ADL voluntarily exercised their right to dissent and their right of withdrawal. Mr. Handlin dramatizes and justifies this withdrawal as a defense of the principle of freedom and negation of an authoritarian planning for Jewish organizations. It would be more accurate, though less melodramatic, to describe the withdrawal as due to an unwillingness to accept certain procedures of association which others believed would add to the effectiveness of the programs undertaken by the various local and national organizations. It was the prerogative of the AJC and the ADL to disagree with the proposals and to withdraw from an association which had voted to set up procedures which were unacceptable to them. One can deplore or approve this decision. It would seem gratuitous to enlarge its meaning into a defense of the principle of freedom and a rejection of authoritarianism. We do not know as yet what changes in the procedures of the NCRAC would be required for the return of the AJC and ADL, and it is highly improbable that the changes or modifications required for this purpose could be dramatized as being a victory of freedom over authoritarianism. Actually the differences to some observers between the proposals made by the AJC-ADL and the "Barr" resolution adopted by the NCRAC were not too large and involved few basic principles. Mr. Handlin should have explained the differences.

There are many forms of inter-agency association among voluntary associations designed to promote improvement of programs. Manufacturers' associations, chambers of commerce, community chests, councils of social agencies, federations, welfare funds, and a host of other types of inter-agency associations have been established for the purpose of improvement of function and for common planning. The history of many such associations is not free from fears and anxieties which have been engendered in the NCRAC controversy—fears of one's own autonomy, of power drives upon the part of one's associates, that undue influence or authority might be exercised by some individuals or agencies in such an association. . . . However, we do not make progress by insisting on separate isolated organizations for fear that an association of agencies requires some adjustment or modification of our traditional procedures. And whether we are dealing with official or voluntary agencies, we must frequently proceed to arrive at a consensus by the process of voting.

Mr. Handlin states that a majority doesn't rule in a university, a church, a business, or a hospital. That is a strange fiction. That is the only way a board of such institutions determines policy. And a majority of stock ownership likewise makes policy and basic decisions in a business. Even in the American Jewish Committee, it is the majority of the Board and the Executive Committee that makes decisions. This attempt to write out of existence majority action as incompatible with voluntary associations is quite fantastic. The fact that majorities in a voluntary organization frequently adjust their actions to minority views is well known, but on some issues the majority view is maintained in spite of the dangers of the sharp dissent and withdrawal of some members. We may question the wisdom of such decisions but we must recognize their validity as a possible procedure in voluntary associations.

Majority action is the method used for determining the views of members in voluntary as well as in governmental bodies; the only difference is that an official agency can enforce its majority decisions, a voluntary agency cannot. This fact was clearly recognized by all parties to the NCRAC controversy and was reaffirmed time and again. To have overlooked this fact, as Mr. Handlin has done, is to make nonsense out of the whole experience.

Mr. Handlin states that "spontaneity, flexibility, versatility have no place in the calculations of planners." That is something he could only have dreamed up himself—he has no basis in fact for it at all. On the contrary, the experience of community organizations and

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federated programs has demonstrated ample opportunity for experiment and change—and very great experimentation and change are taking place under such arrangements. Planning in fact has often stimulated much greater experimentation and change than the bodies themselves engaged in when left to themselves.

Inter-agency associations and councils of agencies are important and useful only if the member organizations share some basic common interests or purposes. The common interests of the NCRAC membership are many and profound. In his concluding paragraph Mr. Handlin says that "These voluntary organizations in turn will function only so long as those who came together to found them wish to continue maintaining communal ends and aspirations." Mr. Handlin does not stop to define what he means by American Jewish communal ends and aspirations. It was, however, the assumption made by Dr. MacIver and by the majority of the members of the NCRAC that the various agencies were all engaged in trying to fulfill American Jewish communal ends and aspirations (whatever these may be) and they have an added obligation to seek the fullest basis of cooperation with other organizations similarly engaged. An association that serves only its own membership, and makes no pretense to serving the entire community, might be absolved from many of the requirements of inter-agency cooperation, but in this field of defense work there is scarcely a function assumed by any organization that does not affect many more Jews than the constituency of the functioning agency.

Incidentally, Mr. Handlin might be interested in knowing that the Chicago Jewish Welfare Fund was one of the original members of the Large City Budgeting Conference and that it has continued this membership, that the LCBC is an independent association not subject to the authority of the CJFWF staff, Board of Directors, or General Assembly, that the LCBC was organized at the request of Baltimore. Like all of the member agencies of the CJFWF, the group of cities constituting the LCBC are served by the staff of the CJFWF. As for the more extreme and sweeping statements such as the charge that the CJFWF "is using financial sanctions to secure to its majority the right to act for the entire Jewish community" and that the CJFWF is "already acting as if they were the fiscal arm of a representative congress"—Mr. Handlin, I am certain, would not want to base his reputation for scholarship upon such fantastic and unsubstantiated pronouncements.

In general, the article deals with ghosts and fears. It never gets down to an examination of what the Barr Plan is, what its purposes are, what its sponsors say it is, what its limitations are, what conditions led to its formulation and adoption, why the other national agencies and almost all local community relations agencies participating voted for it (and in that respect the communities are not outside theoreticians, as he implies, but participants in this work, doing a basic job where people live and attitudes are molded). In fact, if Mr. Handlin wants to live up to the reputation of being "a close student of the evolution of the communal life of the Jewish and other religious and ethnic groups in America" which you say he is, and an authority on the current NCRAC issue as well, I would suggest that he spend some time in studying the NCRAC in actuality. I am assuming of course that the current article was not intended to be a chapter in the "official" history of the American Jewish Committee.

H. L. Lurie
Executive Director
Council of Jewish Federations
and Welfare Funds
New York City

Mr. Handlin Replies

To the Editor of Commentary:

I can quite understand Mr. Lurie's discomfiture at the tone of my article. He was, after all, one of the central actors in the events described.

It is interesting to learn, from the letter, that Mr. Lurie and his partisans agree with me "on the nature of voluntary association" and that they did not intend, in reconstructing the NCRAC, to create a body strong enough to impose discipline within its own ranks. No doubt such assurances are made in good faith. Alas, all too few of us are capable of understanding the motives for our own actions, or in the heat of debate, of estimating dispassionately the consequences of the plans we propose. That is why the wisest of us, under those circumstances, find it helpful to regard a given measure against the background of the past that brought it forth. It was the purpose of my article to supply such a historical background for the present controversy.

I do not find that Mr. Lurie's letter questions either the facts or the interpretations in my account of the past. Where the hurt comes is in the conclusion that the actions of today fit into a pattern discernible from the past. But if the shoe nevertheless fits, Mr. Lurie would do well to wonder whether his own bias does not keep him from seeing the bunion on his toe.

He will thus find it helpful to reconsider two points in his letter. Mr. Lurie agrees with

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me that the effectiveness of the work it does ought to be the basis of our judgment of any organization. It was not, of course, the purpose of my article to attempt such a judgment of any of the agencies. But that was the task of the MacIver Report and that was the obligation of the NCRAC in evaluating the Report. I have read the available material as diligently as I could. I cannot find that either Professor MacIver or the NCRAC made any effort whatsoever—much less one deserving serious scholarly attention—to assess the effectiveness of the agencies involved. Would Mr. Lurie venture to assert, for example, that veterans' affairs were allocated to the JWV, or religious affairs to the UAHC on the basis of a judgment of the effectiveness of the work of those organizations in the fields in question?

Or again, is Mr. Lurie really unaware how meaningless it is to think of majority rule as a simple standard for conduct for a voluntary association? In the case of a university, hospital, or church, the majority of whom shall rule—students, faculty or trustees, patients, doctors, or directors? And in what way can Harvard, Yale, and Columbia associate themselves to arrive at decisions binding upon Princeton? Indeed, no more can be said than that, in some institutions, in some cases, for some purposes, the majority of some group makes decisions. But which institutions, which cases, which group is not determined by abstract ideological assumption, but rather by a practical process that adjusts these forms to the real needs of the members of the organization.

We may pass charitably over such strange statements as that in which Mr. Lurie compares the Anglo-Jewish and Yiddish press to the Chicago *Tribune* and the *Daily Worker*. Mr. Lurie is a busy man, occupied with the practical necessities of his own very important job. Only he would do well to wonder whether those necessities may not have committed him to a course ultimately injurious to the interests of American Jews.

OSCAR HANDLIN

Harvard University
Cambridge, Massachusetts

The "Little" Jews

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Mine is doubtless only one of many comments on Nathan Asch's provocative "Only So Big?" (November 1952) [in which Mr. Asch pointed to the surprising number of references in contemporary literature to Jews as "little"].

That the question is a *little* one would be demonstrated, I feel sure, by any parallel set of quotations in which "little" is applied to others than Jews; still better perhaps by quotations describing "big" bullies and racketeers and tycoons. In the language as I know it, it's not always good to be big.

The diminutive is affectionate. The Jim of whom one is fond becomes a Jimmie. The world is full of Billies and Janies who, despite years, weight, wordly prestige, or an ornery disposition, cling stubbornly to the diminutive nickname bestowed by fond parents. It is pleasanter to be loved than to be respected.

"Little" denotes appreciation. Precious things come in small packages, says the folklore. A sonnet is "riches in a little room." My "little" friend is one whose special virtues are not appreciated by people less discerning than I.

Advertising recognizes "little" as a term of endearment: the "good little suit"; the "little black dress." It follows the idiom which allows a size-44 female to speak of her mink coat as "my little fur wrap."

True, "little" carries a hint of derogation, of belittling. As Nathan Asch implies, it functions as a concession to anti-Semitism. But who does not derogate the object of his respect and affection if that person is held in indifferent regard by others? The diminutive nevertheless invokes a friendly response: "The world may not honor him, but I do." By such concessions to prejudice and warm-hearted refutations of it, humanity asserts itself.

FRANCES COMFORT

Detroit, Michigan

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

May I offer one solution to Mr. Asch's "Puzzler": The "little" in "little Jew"—is it not, perhaps, or was it not originally, a term of endearment rather than of measurement? As, for instance, the French *"petit"* in *"mon petit"*? Thus, one Jew will refer to another (possibly exceeding six feet in height) as "a *yidl.*"

This term, translated into "a little Jew," may be the root of all evil "little" Jews.

MASCHA KALEKO

New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

After reading Nathan Asch on the "little Jew," I walked to the corner cigar store and began browsing through the collection of reprints. Lo and behold, on page 140 of Thomas Wolfe's *Only the Dead Know Brooklyn*, I found this gem: "My little Jews stood first, their dark eyes fixed on me with a dejected but unwavering reproach. . . ."

DAVID ANTMAN

Red Hook, New York

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"Children of Two Houses"

To the Editor of Commentary:

To a reader who always held Commentary in highest esteem it came as a shock and disappointment to find in your December issue the story "Children of Two Houses" by Elaine Gottlieb. Not the fact that you published it—but that you published it without a commentary seems to me deplorable and not in line with your program "to enlighten and clarify public opinion on problems of Jewish concern." For this confusing and misleading story can only add to the widespread confusion and ignorance in matters of Jewish concern, both in our own fold and among our Christian neighbors.

Elaine Gottlieb writes about her childhood experience: "We almost wept. It was hard not to weep. We wanted to ask a question, but we knew no one would answer it. Bitterly, we went upstairs."

"It was hard not to weep" for me also after reading this story. For does it not reveal how sadly and bitterly "both houses" have failed in their sacred obligation to respond to the innermost needs of their children, to offer explanation and loving guidance in religious matters to searching young hearts and minds? Is that all that Jewish parents and grandparents, be they Reform or Orthodox, have to give to their children of their rightful inheritance? Their inheritance of the good way of life, of the beauty, the love of God and fellow man, the kindliness and mercy, the tactfulness and charitableness, the tolerance, the joy and fervor of religious observances that mean Judaism? As they then "bitterly . . . went upstairs" will not these children, once they are adults, also go bitterly out into the world? Will they be able to understand themselves, or for that matter, will they be able to understand their Christian neighbors, for a large part of whom—in spite of all its commercialization and nationalization—Christmas still holds a deep and sacred religious meaning?

Has not Commentary this time failed in its "aims to meet the need for a journal of significant thought and opinion on Jewish affairs and contemporary issues" by withholding its opinion and by avoiding the issue expressed in this controversial and misleading story?

Louise Gruen

New York City

To the Editor of Commentary:

The story "Children of Two Houses," which appeared in your December issue, is an affront to the sensibilities of even your most liberal readers. (And I am disregarding completely the "moral" of the story, which, in its thesis that Christmas is a national and not a Christian holiday, is at least questionable.) It is not a short story. For whether or not the author intended it so, it is nothing more than a piece of propaganda-by-innuendo against a large segment of American Jewry, Orthodoxy. Had it appeared as an article attempting to expound a legitimate point of view, well and good. An open attack can be defended. But to use the artistic medium of the short story to ridicule matters which to many of your readers are sacred is an insult to the art of writing, no matter how technically skilled that writing may be. Since the end result is propaganda, I feel that its publication . . . is regrettable.

The piece makes of Orthodoxy a gray, dismal way of life. . . . Undoubtedly Miss Gottlieb is a gifted writer. But she has missed entirely that enviable trait of objectivity in her art. Surely a sensitivity such as hers could not have overlooked the happiness of traditional living, the liberty of restriction under God and Torah. . . .

(Rabbi) Emanuel Feldman

Congregation Beth Jacob
Atlanta, Georgia

To the Editor of Commentary:

First the brickbat: Is it necessary to insult us of the Orthodox faith to make a case for Reform Judaism? That is what Elaine Gottlieb does in her story "Children of Two Houses." She exalts the Christmas spirit but does not mention the Chanukah festival. Both probably derive from a heathen celebration of the winter solstice. But one uses a biological anomaly as an excuse for gift-giving, whereas we Orthodox base our holiday on a historical incident. And I have yet to meet Orthodox people who look on children with "derision and disdain."

And now the posy. In my thirty-six years of studying and teaching economics I have not come across a clearer or more accurate exposition of economic theory than Daniel Bell's "The Prospects of American Capitalism." It should be made compulsory reading for the teachers of the subject in New York City.

William D. Max

Brooklyn, New York

Keynes and Schumpeter

To the Editor of Commentary:

Daniel Bell's review article in the December Commentary on Galbraith's recent book, *American Capitalism,* traverses a great deal of controversial economic territory, and no dis-

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cerning reader could be expected to accept his judgment and analysis of all the writers and schools of thought which he covers. Your author writes about Hayek, J. M. Keynes, Keynesians, Alvin Hansen, and Schumpeter as well as about the book by Galbraith. In my view his criticism of *American Capitalism*, because it fails to analyze the character of our present defense garrison, or as Mr. Bell calls it, "readiness economy," is fully merited.

What I don't like about the article is the juxtaposition of the popular and the scholarly; Mr. Bell in the main presents Keynes and Hansen as shortsighted depression economists while his measure of Schumpeter is more appreciative. It is obvious that Mr. Bell likes neither J. M. Keynes, Keynesians, nor Alvin Hansen, and he is probably unaware of his change of pace as he passes from a discussion of these writers to the ideas of Schumpeter. In presenting the ideas of Keynes and of Hansen he gives us a popular judgment, mainly of those who do not like Keynesian economics, while in his presentation of Schumpeter he examines the basic writings of this highly original and provocative professor of economics.

VALDEMAR CARLSON

Antioch College
Yellow Springs, Ohio

The Meaning of the Maccabees

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Theodor Gaster ("The True Glory of the Maccabean Revolt," December 1952) maintains that the Maccabean revolt was not a people's uprising but a minority movement because "official spokesman of the Jewish community were hostile to it" and "the bulk of the Jewish population was already so far gone in the process of assimilation that the champion of Israel's distinctive identity meant nothing to it."

While it is true that the leaders of the Jewish community had succumbed to Hellenism, this hardly signifies that the uprising was a minority movement. As to the bulk of the Jews being assimilated, Bickerman writes in *The Maccabees* (p. 36): "The mass of the peasantry, on the other hand, remained secretly devoted to the old faith. Judah ruthlessly extirpated *the few* in the countryside who followed the reform party, but at the same time he restored freedom of faith to the majority."

This would put the shoe on the other foot. The few, it seems, suppressed the religious freedom of the many, while the Maccabees represented the active leadership of the majority and led the battle for its rights. Dr. Gaster himself points to the great number who resisted Hellenization when he tells us how Antiochus massacred some forty thousand Jews in Jerusalem alone. . . .

On the matter of Hebraic and Hellenic cultural distinctions, one may agree that these have been oversimplified. However, the mass appeal of the Hebraic culture stressed virtue and morality while Hellenic culture in its effect on its masses made for the deterioration of these essential values. When the priests surrendered "their priestly linens for the nakedness of Greek sports" (Bickerman), the Maccabees arose not only to fight for the right to be different but to reassert the qualitatively distinct virtues of Judaism and to stress a higher standard of moral conduct.

When we utter the prayer "Thou didst deliver the many into the hands of the few" we still mean the Syrian hordes into the hands of the few Maccabees rather than assimilationists into the hands of pietists. Similarly, it is still of these Syrians that we say "the strong into the hands of the weak, the impure into the hands of the pure, the wicked into the hands of the righteous, and the arrogant into the hands of them that occupied themselves with Thy Torah."

(RABBI) MILTON H. ELEFANT

B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundation
University of Maine
Orono, Maine

Mistake

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In her charming article "My Father Was a Doctor" (January) Helen Ratnoff Plotz makes a slight mistake. The flag of the Weimar Republic (and now again of the West German Bundesrepublik) was not, as she writes, Black-White-Red but rather Black-Red-Gold. The German nationalist parties consistently refused to accept the flag of the Republic and, in fact, referred to the Gold often in obscene terms.

ERNEST MAASS

Forest Hills, New York

The Prague Trial

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Thanks and congratulations on "Stalin Follows in Hitler's Footsteps" in the January COMMENTARY. The documentation through the publication of copious excerpts from the officially broadcast text of the Prague trial is the perfect background for the critical and convincing analysis. I wonder, however, if the free peoples have really "learned their lesson by now."

JAMES G. McDONALD

New York City

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BOOKS IN REVIEW

The Course of American Reform

RENDEZVOUS WITH DESTINY: A HISTORY OF MODERN AMERICAN REFORM. By ERIC F. GOLDMAN. Knopf. 503 pp. $5.00.

Reviewed by GRANVILLE HICKS

PROFESSOR GOLDMAN has given us a full-scale account of what has been variously known as reformism and liberalism and progressivism in America, from the gentlemanly revolt of the Liberal Republicans in 1872 to the triumph of Harry Truman in 1948 and the Korean crisis of 1950. One can find here excellent accounts of Populism, muckraking, Theodore Roosevelt's New Nationalism, Woodrow Wilson's New Freedom, the Bohemianism of the 20's, and the New Deal. Along the way the author makes what seems to me a completely fresh contribution by examining the complex relations between various minority groups, particularly the Jews and the Negroes, and the reform movement.

The book's emphasis, however, falls not on movements but on ideas and on the men and women who originated them or gave them currency. When the great expansion of industrialism after the Civil War fabulously enriched a few while failing to benefit or actually impoverishing the many, a loud cry arose demanding government action to curb the rich and to make this once more the land of opportunity. But the advocates of reform immediately encountered a powerful body of thought, which had grown out of Malthus and Adam Smith and Ricardo, and then out of Darwin and Spencer, and which Goldman calls Social or Conservative Darwinism. Social reform, they were told, might be desirable, but it was impossible. "The truth is," wrote William Graham Sumner, "that the social order is fixed by laws of nature precisely analogous to those of the physical order. The most that man can do . . . by his ignorance and conceit [is] to mar the operation of the social laws." At the turn of the century, in an onslaught that Goldman brilliantly describes, this "steel chain of ideas" was subjected to analysis by economists such as Ely and Veblen, sociologists such as Ross, anthropologists such as Boas, theologians such as Rauschenbusch, jurists such as Holmes and Brandeis, historians such as Turner, Simons, Smith, and Beard, philosophers such as Dewey, and journalists such as Steffens and Baker, and within a decade it was dissolved.

Thus there emerged a new body of thought, which Goldman calls Reform Darwinism. The Reform Darwinians were agreed that there were no natural laws that prevented the state from modifying the social structure, and that state intervention was in fact desirable. Beyond this, Goldman points out, there was disagreement as to the role of the state. Most of the Reform Darwinians thought of the state in roughly Jeffersonian terms, as a liberating agency, negating the powers of private business and other special interests. Herbert Croly, however, in *The Promise of American Life*, argued that Jefferson's theories were not adapted to the problems of modern industrial society, and set forth a Hamiltonian concept of government. Maintaining that trust-busting was futile and the restoration of free competition undesirable, he advocated powerful trusts and powerful unions regulated by a powerful state. When, in 1912, Theodore Roosevelt picked up Croly's ideas, the New Nationalism became a political force.

Two reform parties clashed in the election of 1912, with the party of conservatism out of the running. Woodrow Wilson, campaigning for the New Freedom, attacked Roosevelt's program as a defense of privilege and a threat of tyranny, and his demand, after election, for trust legislation, tariff reduction, and banking reform was in the Jeffersonian tradition. Yet Goldman observes that there were streaks of the New Nationalism in the Wilson administration, and the effect of American participation in the First World War was an increased concentration of power in the hands of the federal government. When the reformers came

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back into power in 1933, after twelve years in the wilderness, their new leader, Franklin Roosevelt, seemed, especially in such measures as the NRA, to be adopting his cousin's New Nationalism, but Goldman feels that the form the New Deal finally took was essentially Wilsonian. And once again an experiment in the New Freedom was interrupted by war. In what has emerged since, Goldman discerns no clear pattern.

One might wish that Professor Goldman had been able to say something about European counterparts of the American reform movement, for the battle over reform was no parochial squabble but part of the crisis of Western Civilization. He has done so much, however, that it is ungrateful to ask for more, and certainly there is basis enough in his book for a tentative evaluation. What comes out clearly, first of all, is what many of us have long believed—that the reform movement was historically necessary. An industrial-urban civilization cannot survive without a strong central government committed to the public welfare. It also seems clear that the reform movement expressed, along with other things to be sure, a greater generosity and a livelier intelligence than could be found on the conservative side.

Yet those who, like Goldman, consider themselves "part of the 'liberal' tradition," cannot afford to be smug, and there is little complacency in Goldman's book. He is aware that the strong government required by reformism is always a threat to the health of society. "We must," he quotes V. L. Parrington as saying, "have a political state powerful enough to deal with corporate wealth, but how are we going to keep that state with its augmenting power from being captured by the force we want it to control?" That is one problem, and in the 20's, when Parrington asked the question, it seemed to be the most important one. But we have learned since then that the state may be captured by its supposed friends as well as by its avowed enemies, and we have been forced to ask ourselves how we are to protect reform against the reformers.

This, as Goldman realizes, is a moral problem, and he is disturbed, as so many people are, by the question of relativism. It was by demonstrating the relativity of moral standards that the thinkers of the reform movement destroyed the Conservative Darwinian case for the status quo, but Goldman asks whether they did not destroy the basis of Reform Darwinism as well. He notes, on the one hand, the willingness of some reformers to act on the principle that a good end justifies any means, and, on the other, the cynical selfishness into which this one and that one have fallen. The problem is dismaying and not easy of solution, but certainly the remedy is not to adopt some convenient absolute, as a few of our panicky intellectuals have been doing. The remedy, if there is one, lies in the constant examination and reexamination of the nature of man and the nature of society.

In any case I believe that fewer reformers have been betrayed by relativism than have been misled by concealed absolutes. These absolutes have been of various kinds, but the most pervasive has been the Marxist absolute of the class struggle and the inevitable triumph of social justice through the victory of the proletariat. Goldman's failure to deal with the relations between reformism and Marxism is the only major shortcoming of his book. Throughout much of the history of reformism, reformers and socialists regarded each other as allies. Indeed, such professed socialists as Upton Sinclair and Charles Edward Russell were indistinguishable from reformers in their short-run programs, and many of the reformers would not have quarreled much with Sinclair and Russell about ultimate aims. This confusion made it possible for Lincoln Steffens to represent himself as a liberal and skeptic while his expressed opinions came closer and closer to those of Marx and, later, of Lenin. We have had, as a matter of fact, many influential thinkers—Veblen, Beard, and Parrington among them—who have expressed Marxist ideas without acknowledging, perhaps without recognizing, their Marxist character. Is it any wonder that some of us, when we got around to reading Marx in the 30's, felt that we had been Marxists all the time without knowing it?

Against such a background, Goldman's treatment of the 30's seems inadequate and even naive. In these days, when we are asked to believe that practically all American intellectuals were Stalinists in the 30's, it is good to be reminded that from the beginning the New Deal commanded the allegiance of a large section of the liberal intelligentsia, and that some of the top New Dealers were among the earliest fighters against Stalinism.

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Yet to devote a mere three or four brief pages to the influence of Communism in the 30's is to misrepresent the history of the reform movement. For the Communist converts had almost all been originally advocates of reform, and had moved from reformism to Communism by what seemed to them a rigorously logical path. If, as Parrington said, the problem was how to keep the state from being taken over by corporate wealth, a very obvious solution, as all socialists knew, was to take over corporate wealth lock, stock, and barrel. And if you were really serious about taking over, then, as Steffens was saying even in the 20's, you learned how to do the job from those who had already done it—i.e., the Russian Communists.

To CALL attention to the relations between reformism and Communism is not to brand reformism a heresy but simply to point out a danger. Reformism, Goldman suggests, could conceivably lead to fascism by way of the New Nationalism. It could also lead to Communism by way of fear and hatred of the status quo—"the System." The truth is that there is a totalitarian potential in our industrial-urban culture, and it is therefore not surprising that there should be a totalitarian threat in reformism. The solution is not to abandon reformism but to struggle continuously against the dangers it involves.

If, however, I must point out that Goldman does not see some of those dangers as clearly as he might, I cannot end on that critical note. The book is a brilliant book, based on magnificent research, vigorously written, honest and independent in its thinking, generous in its sympathies. Particularly notable are the portraits-cum-analyses of maybe a hundred reformers, from Samuel Tilden and Henry George to Thomas Corcoran and David Lilienthal, each of them the product of careful reading and careful thinking. Here are materials for that critical examination of American reformism that is particularly necessary at the present moment.

The destiny with which this generation has a rendezvous is certainly not what Franklin Roosevelt had in mind when he made his speech back in 1936, but it is a destiny of great importance just the same, and we must be grateful to any book that helps us, as does Professor Goldman's excellent work, to be prepared for it.

The Peeve as Humor

THE ILL-TEMPERED CLAVICHORD. By S. J. PERELMAN. Simon and Schuster. 244 pp. $2.95.

Reviewed by MORRIS FREEDMAN

THIS most recent collection of S. J. Perelman's essays, though small like all of his volumes, makes, as usual, exasperatingly slow reading. On each page you have to plow through a syntax and vocabulary as self-consciously baroque as Sir Thomas Browne's. More than one sketch at a sitting cloys your senses. Not that Perelman isn't the funniest American writer still actively working: the fantastic cavorting of his imagination is as ridiculously hilarious today as when he wrote scripts for the Marx Brothers. But the strain, the near violent tension of a Perelman production leaves you limp.

Like a hockey goalie, Perelman lets nothing get by him—no foible of language or life—without taking a swipe at it. Never relaxed or off-hand like Benchley or Thurber, or urbane like E. B. White, or casual like Will Rogers, he insists on taking personally all lapses from grace in writing or living that impress themselves on him. He is derisive, sour, nihilistic, uncharitable, in short, as he himself suggests in the title of this latest book, ill-tempered, a Boys' High humorist permanently engaged in a crazy imitation of a retired Pukka Sahib growling at the decay of standards.

Part of his acerbity is the result of his seldom working directly from life. His wit is exegetical; it lives largely off the writing which sees experience through the weird prisms of advertising agencies or Hollywood publicity offices. But reality nevertheless underpins his burlesque. He is always contrasting the implausibility of advertising and cheap culture with the unexpected but convincing tawdriness that reality, however carefully manipulated, inevitably takes on. It is in the pull between the two kinds of distortion—Perelman's of reality, the other of a manufactured tinsel ideal—that we find the fun.

In thus rooting himself, however remotely, in life, Perelman is nearer to the earthy traditions of Twain and Will Rogers than most contemporary American funny men. But he differs even more significantly from Cantor, Berle, Durante, Benny, Hope, Skelton, Jessel, Sophie Tucker, and some of the syndicated

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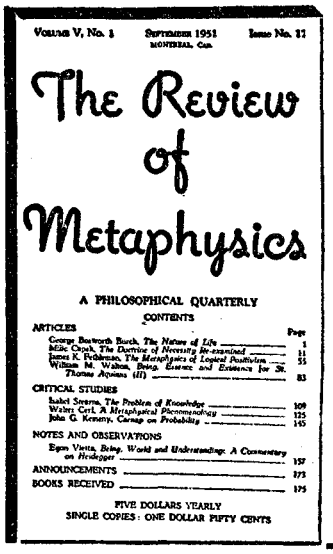

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columnists and occasional contributors to the mass-circulation magazines. These are either smart-alecky and flip, or they sell an artificial, vicarious vitality (we are never really meant to respond to much more than Sophie Tucker's or Eddie Cantor's or Durante's being the last lively survivors of a breed fast becoming extinct—the nostalgia hangs like a pall during their appearances), or they just keep offering themselves masochistically, in the fashion of bobbing targets for baseballs at a carnival counter. One way or another, they all peddle personality; they insist on attention to their very bodies, emphasizing baldness, stoutness, proboscisity; and Berle, I understand, is most effective and nasty when subduing a night club heckler who is threatening to divert the audience from him.

PERELMAN is not, to be sure, so impersonal and anonymous as Sid Caesar, perhaps the finest of modern performing comedians and satirists; Perelman does use himself, but the "I" of his sketches seems factitious, a way merely of introducing the note of autobiography required by current written satire. Nor is he as spontaneously ebullient as Groucho Marx, with whom he shares, among other talents, a wonderful facility for shrewd and surrealistic punning. But like both Caesar and Marx, he bases his humor on the exploitation of technique rather than just personality or "material."

I don't suppose any recent writer outside of Joyce and possibly Beerbohm has shown a greater responsiveness than Perelman to the effect of written language—the flow of a sentence, the meaning of a word. And his consciousness of the multiple possibilities of communication is positively Talmudic. Here is a moderately representative sample:

> Who, seeing me of a summer afternoon in the fashionable crush at the Plaza Auction Galleries, in a Savile Row suit and yellow dogskin gloves, my chin resting meditatively on a Malacca stick and acquiring some trifle of *boiserie*—my chin often acquires some trifle of *boiserie* independently of me—who, I repeat, would ever think of me as a connoisseur of livestock feed? Nobody would believe these tapering ivory fingers, from which elegantly depends a scented Egyptian cigarette, capable of detecting the sawdust that lurks in laying mash or of distinguishing one oat from another, and, as a matter of fact, they're not.

It is this prodigality that is so tiring. The sustained cerebration in some of his sketches is almost of the kind required for playing or watching chess, or for reading a particularly ungraceful New Critic's explication of a poem. Between sessions with Perelman you have to keep returning to the everyday world of sloppy communication and sloppy feeling to catch the full character of his astringency.

At the bottom of Perelman's criticism of life and language is the traditional serious, self-satisfied, snobbish Jewish contempt for foolishness and the works of thick heads. It shows up mediocrity and idiocy by brilliant "showing off," taking it for granted that criteria—whether in doing or living—must be preserved. If you insist on fiddling in public, you must be ready to be judged against Heifetz. But as my father used to say, trying to extenuate my failures in school to my implacable mother, not everyone can or needs to be a Heifetz or an Einstein. One becomes most impatient with Perelman when he expends his elaborate strategy and enormous fire-power on some minute pip of a target such as the lush prose of an inconsequential trashy novel of the 1920's, totally forgotten now, perhaps never really known.

Perelman's sprinkling of Yiddish throughout

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his essays suggests that he is slyly talking for the family—made up not necessarily of those who know Yiddish by inheritance, but of all the metropolitan sophisticates who read the *New Yorker*—where, with rare exceptions, his work appears—and who may be presumed by virtue of their civilized sense of inclusiveness to have picked up a smattering of the secret language. The Yiddish is just another device in his repertory, a part of the jargon of insiders. In the following, for instance, the mention of Thoreau is just as important as the use of the word *"schlemiel,"* and when Perelman calls Thoreau a *schlemiel,* the joke lies not in his pretending that he does not understand Thoreau, which would be the point of the joke if Eddie Cantor made it, but precisely in the easy insistence that he does.

The beautycoon, as I flinch at calling him, opened his heart. "The reason women buy cosmetics," he said, laying his nose slyly alongside his finger, "is because they buy hope. In other words," he added, glomming a phrase from an impractical *schlemiel* named Henry David Thoreau, who gets himself quoted in the damnedest contexts, "most women lead lives of dullness, quiet desperation, and I think cosmetics are a wonderful escape from it." He then cited a liquid foundation called Touch and Glow that apparently confers powers of escape analogous to those enjoyed by Harry Houdini. . . .

In the following exchange, from what I found the funniest skit in the book, "A Hepcat May Look at a King," Perelman indicates his own awareness of the hidden fraternities in our society. Two Oriental potentates are besieging a booking agent's office after Michael Todd's *Peep Show* used songs written by Bhumibol, the King of Siam (which, for the skeptical and uninformed, actually happened).

BHOPAL: Mind you, I won't say this Bhumibol ain't an able administrator, but he don't know a beguine from a cakewalk. The kid is absolutely devoid of rhythm.

KAPURTHALA: He's a Buddhist, that's why. A downbeat don't mean a thing to a Buddhist.

BHOPAL: I'm surprised a showman like Todd would fall for that type air.

KAPURTHALA: Eight to five he's a Buddhist, too. All those guys stick together.

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Perelman *aficionados* mayn't really stick together, as Buddhists probably don't, but like their Mexican and Spanish brethren they do know that they all enjoy watching a superb matador dispose of the bull.

A Liberal Pessimist

LORD ACTON. By GERTRUDE HIMMELFARB. University of Chicago Press. 260 pp. $3.75.

Reviewed by GEORGE N. SHUSTER

WHY should anybody wish to read about a scholarly but relatively obscure member of the Dalberg family who is known as Lord Acton? His reputation rests primarily on his editorship of a voluminous compendium of historical knowledge, the *Cambridge Modern History,* and on a maxim, ". . . power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely." But there is much more to say about him, and several scholars have tried to do so. It is not often that one comes upon an erudite book which possesses so much merit as Miss Himmelfarb's study manifests on nearly every page. She writes with fidelity to the recondite information she has gathered, but has verve and aptness of expression to spare. Nobody can write such a study unless respect and affection have gone into its making. And I can only suppose that Miss Himmelfarb, like many other people, has come to the conclusion that Acton is made to order for our time. If the remembrance of any prophet can rescue the concept of liberal thought from the low estate into which it has nearly everywhere fallen, it may well be that of this unusual English Catholic who was the most learned man of his time as well as its most unproductive scholar. Acton was so continuously immersed in intellectual controversy that he completed little which was to remain a permanent topic of debate.

The subject he had assigned himself for treatment during his most mature years was liberty. But his projected history of this always absorbing and difficult topic never got farther than two lectures and an essay—fragments of such depth, pertinence, and brilliance that they are now being read with ever increasing esteem. Miss Himmelfarb comments on nearly every aspect of Acton's thought on this subject. He held that liberty confers dignity on history because it alone crowns the history of man with dignity. Maintaining freedom, he said, is the essence of heroism; and suppressing it is criminal. He did not concede that there could exist any valid reason for persecuting men because of their ideas, and inquisitorial deaths were anathema to him. On the other hand, he held that it was equally wrong to do violence for the sake of freedom. Therewith Acton made the historian the arbiter of history. The fact that his moral standards were so inflexible and in their way anticipatory of the totalitarian disaster through which we are painfully living is what makes his writing so vitally interesting at the moment.

Of course Acton was not a twister of historical fact into moralistic patterns. He scanned the record with complete openness of mind and meticulous respect for the evidence. He spread every event on the page with as much care as a poor man uses in smoothing the butter on his bread. The extent of his knowledge was staggering to his contemporaries and may well fill us, too, with awe. He helped to give to many books by others their pith; and when he finally became Regius Professor of History at Cambridge University, England saw how virtually impossible it was to lay claim to some really intensive understanding of the past. No doubt younger men were more in awe of than in love with him. But many of them came to see that while his judgment was stern, no verdict was handed down that did not reflect an unimpeachable thirst for justice.

MISS HIMMELFARB'S study, which moves with consummate dexterity through a maze of theological and political discussion, begins by showing Acton entering the lists at the time of the Vatican Council, which in 1870 proclaimed the dogma of papal infallibility. This doctrine does not now raise goose pimples on the average citizen's flesh, but at the time it not only engendered turmoil in the Catholic Church but it also disturbed, amused, or angered the entire Western world. For it seemed to leave far behind the most recalcitrant versions of Divine Right. Was not everything a Sovereign Pontiff said henceforth to be looked upon as inspired from on high?

Acton had studied in Munich under Ignaz Doellinger, the ablest ecclesiastical historian of his time. From this first-rate teacher he learned respect for the information upon which any reputable study of past events must be based,

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and for the moral probity with which a historian must be equipped if he is to express a judgment. No doubt Doellinger had his meed of professorial quirks, but to the English boy he seemed the incarnation of academic dedication. It was no rashly formed opinion. The Bavarian savant symbolized by his fidelity to his own monarch the homage he paid to scholarship. And he recognized in his pupil a kindred spirit.

When the Vatican Council was convened, Acton became the center of English opposition to the doctrine of papal infallibility even as Doellinger was its most vigorous critic in Germany. Miss Himmelfarb naturally tells the story from the point of view of Acton and his friends. Possibly she does not take sufficiently into account the fact that the final text of the Vatican decree (entitled *De Fide*) was by some near-miracle written by a French prelate, Monsignor Dupanloup, whom Acton was to consider a traitor to the cause, so that the dogma as eventually defined did not abrogate but rather reaffirmed Catholic tradition, even though it assigned to the Papacy a role which Acton and his friends deemed unwarranted. It has been argued that the principal effect was virtually to compel the Church to elect popes who would be able to live up to the parts in which they were now perforce cast. And it would indeed seem that there had never previously been a succession of Sovereign Pontiffs of the quality of those who succeeded Pius IX.

Doellinger appears to have surmised that this might well prove to be the case, despite the ban of excommunication which lay heavily upon him. But Acton did not, and as a result the feeling of being isolated from his most intimate friend lay heavily on his spirit. This mood Miss Himmelfarb appreciates. Her task was not an easy one. She sketches the various conflicts in which Acton was involved with imagination and care. I am persuaded that she might have been still more successful if she had said a little more about the intimate personal history of her hero. There can be no doubt that many would be interested. Bavarian admirers now pay visits to Acton's grave beside the Tegernsee.

At the close of her study, Miss Himmelfarb undertakes to make an appraisal of the philosophic position on which Acton elected to take his stand. It is a very astute one. She calls him "a pessimist who never broke faith with his own exalted vision of what man should be." It

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JAMES WECHSLER, Editor, New York Post.

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is easy to be told to do the goose step if you think that is manifest human destiny. Simple also is the surmisal that progress is on the side of those who talk most about the proletariat—simple of mind always and unfortunately sometimes simple of heart. But to be profoundly convinced that man could be great if he really wanted to be, that is something to shout, laugh, and weep about. Mostly weep. The tears in Acton's legacy are now become the pearls beyond price.

The Communists on the Couch

REPORT ON THE AMERICAN COMMUNIST. By MORRIS L. ERNST and DAVID LOTH. Holt. 240 pp. $3.00.

Reviewed by OLIVER SNYDER

THE publication of this book by Morris Ernst and David Loth probably marks a new phase in the fight against Communism: the full-length—if somewhat belated—attempt by liberals themselves to understand the personality of American Communists. By examining the case histories of three hundred former Communist party rank-and-filers, the authors claim to have found out what makes a Communist tick.

Ernst and Loth believe that understanding Communists (1) "will remove fear," (2) will put us "in a better position to prevent the rank and file . . . from joining in the first place," and (3) will "certainly" make it possible for us "to get them out before they have become dangerous agents of a foreign power." Such goals are admirable but unrealistic. Understanding anything or anyone does not necessarily remove fear: one can understand how a gun works, the psychological workings of a homicidal maniac or a Nazi, and still be afraid of them—in fact, the more you understand the more you fear. In this, too, fear is often the beginning of wisdom. (Panic is of course another matter.) Their kind of "understanding" of the ex-Communist's motives for joining the party, far from offering any "certainty" that we can reconvert Communists to democracy before they become dangerous, leads these authors into a psychological swamp.

LUCKILY, *Report on the American Communist* includes the first-hand accounts of some former C. P. members. At most what these accounts offer is additional confirmation of by now familiar patterns in Communist thinking, but this has its usefulness.

The bulk of the rank and file seems to consist of fairly well-educated, native-born whites from urban middle-class families. Many were do-gooders dismayed at the conditions of a world which they seldom knew much about. Betty R—'s father was a $25,000-a-year businessman. While in college she was attracted by the campus radicals and joined the Young Communist League because of "a desire to better working conditions." Paul J—, also from a well-to-do family, joined the party "out of intellectual excitement in order to make a better world." The desire to do good is certainly a noble aim, but we are reminded here that when it is so completely selfless—so pure and naked—it can become a positive menace. Often a dangerous headiness takes possession of those who feel freed—by the sense of their own pure altruism—from any check on their self-ordained mission to prescribe what is good for others. A little self-interest is a healthy corrective for the saviors of mankind, as many of them found out once they had been ground fine in the mills of the Communist gods.

Another aspect of Communist commitment to abstraction is in the utopian theme that runs through these case histories. Harry F— was attracted to Communism because it made him "feel part of a great, world-wide movement that eventually would win and save mankind from every evil." Stephen Z— felt that "we were going to make a 'decent world.'" Robert O—, who was a successful recruiting agent for the party, describes his dream as "the utopian promise of a society on earth free from all the human weaknesses. . . ." So many former Communists either cite or imply this promise that there can be little doubt about the centrality of such an appeal. One does not need a particularly unhappy childhood or adult life in order to respond to it; it is the hope that springs eternal out of man's fate. And this is not the place to discuss whether or not it is possible to realize a world free from every evil. What is important here is how much Communists are willing to sacrifice now—both personally and otherwise—for the future good life.

How much? Just about everything. For from the belief in utopianism comes the corollary belief that any means can be used to attain this glorious end. William Z— gave a quarter of his income to the party and "lived a

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sacrificial, hazardous life." Paul J— took "personal risks of jail and persecution." Theft and the hounding of anti- or former Communists is quite common in the party—even among the young. While in the Y.C.L., William E— "stole books and examination papers from anti-C.P. boys at school." Sidney W— showed no compunction about using pacifist arguments to talk his mother into marching in Communist parades and demonstrations. Robert O— says that "the chances of living through the world war and revolutions necessary to bring about the world union of Soviet Socialist Republics and to raise the Red Flag in America, the last fortress of capitalism, would be very slight. We were ready to give our lives 'for the movement' and the 'emancipation of mankind.'"

Ernst and Loth have figured out that the average member is about twenty years old when he joins, and remains a member for only two to three years. This youthfulness partially accounts for their ardor in fulfilling the demands made upon them. Only partially, however, for one of the most powerful attractions of the Communist party is precisely how much sacrifice it does demand. This, combined with an appearance of great vitality and a promise to provide a small community of kindred pure-minded souls, gives the party its aura. Lucille O— "was eager for any new allegiance that would give me some sort of anchor and security within the framework of my idealistic concepts." Edward C— looks back on his party experiences and "must say it is too bad that other organizations cannot evoke the same degree of dedication and selflessness and sacrifices." Caroline J— found Communists young and "exciting." "Membership seemed to give much more meaning to my life." Leonard W— sums up: "All of us submitted ourselves and our lives as if we were entering a holy order. . . . My home, my school, my college, my fraternity, my father, my mother didn't count. They were either people to be used or enemies to be ultimately destroyed. . . ."

The lesson here, briefly, would seem to be that the difficult task ahead of us is the re-evaluation and reinvigorating of American traditions. A sense of community has to be established so that both young and old will feel that they have a stake in continuing the-world-they-never-made. In fact, before they go about changing it, a necessary preliminary stage is that they must see at least that there *are* nu-

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merous advantages present in such a world.

Now for the explanations, the whys and wherefore of the Communist psychology. Here, in what in the authors' minds is obviously the meat course, we get pretty poor pickings. It is characteristic of our tolerant and liberal age that we can be disturbed by intolerant and strongly dedicated men. This is probably why so many people have become intoxicated with a kind of watered-down psychoanalysis: its pat formulas explain away difficult problems, neatly and without involving too much personal discomfort for thought or emotion, by "proving" that they are caused by neuroses. Ernst and Loth must be numbered among the latest victims of the epidemic. Many of their questions were framed to bring out the nature of the respondent's childhood, and his psychological relationships with parents and friends. These answers, especially, seem to be published in full—and a boring lot they are. Authoritative fathers, passive mothers, lovely successful sisters, and poor little me—all combine to give a grisly picture of American childhood. Out of this welter of self-pity Ernst and Loth construct their generalizations about the submerged forces in the personality of the American Communist.

The "real" motivation which leads Americans to join the party is "the psychological quirk . . . [which] stems from one or more of these factors: There is a sense of personal inadequacy, whether that in turn was induced by resentment to an overpowering personality in youth, by specific handicap of a physical or spiritual nature, by some strong frustration, or by an inability to reach independent decisions."

Ernst and Loth do not feel that they are psychologists, and they believe that "the subject calls for a great deal more study by people who are experts." They even state that "this is not an attempt at amateur psychoanalysis" (it is certainly not professional). But qualifications and disclaimers like these do little to disguise the authors' smug belief that they have found the Key—"the rebel's desire for a papa," "one to whom love was denied," "escape from self," "rebellious children," "to reject a natural father or mother." Vaguely aware that these "real" motives might be ascribed to almost any "joiner"—and any human being—the authors struggle to establish distinctions, but remain bogged down in the confusions with which they approached their task. The explicit testimony of the autobiographies to the effect that people join the party out of conviction is rejected again and again in favor of "the powerful factor."

Many anti-Communists will be startled to learn that "to consider [Communism] in terms of ideology or philosophy rather than people . . . leads to abstractions and misconceptions rather than facts," and is even in some way un-American. In effect, their immoderate enthusiasm at the discovery that there is an emotional basis for ideas has led the authors to throw out ideas almost entirely: until now, we have been fooled by ideas into merely shadow-boxing with Communism; now that this book gives us the "facts," we'll be able to get somewhere.

This dislike of ideas causes these authors particular difficulty when they come to consider why Communists leave the party. Here again they are forced to impugn the testimony of their own witnesses, and we are left to feel that leaving the party is just as irrational as joining it.

But the greatest embarrassment the authors suffer is in trying to decide what to do with their discovery that "American Communists are motivated largely by psychological factors." The only new proposal in their "New Program to Defeat the Communist Party in the U.S.A." is the suggestion that "these same factors must be used decisively in combating [Communists]." Obviously the best way to implement this would be to psychoanalyze all Communists, or to make sure that children have happy childhoods, good papas and mamas, are not denied love, and are not allowed to escape from themselves. Ernst and Loth avoid this conclusion by passing the buck to the "experts," who in turn are to draw up a report that "should be an important guide to parents and teachers in

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the rearing of a generation that might escape entirely the emotional taint of Communism." One can only say that a generation composed of such new supermen might indeed be able to solve all our problems.

It should be remarked finally that in tending to ignore the "hard core" and concentrating on the rank and file, Ernst and Loth create an erroneous impression about the strength of the party. For it is the long-dedicated fanatics who do the most work and who are the greatest threat. The peripheral rank-and-filers are either used as window dressing or are being seasoned for more important assignments. It is a dangerous misconception to regard *the* American Communist as an ineffectual rank-and-filer.

It would be perverse to deny that clues as to the emotions involved in adherence to the Communist party can help us—if they are well-grounded, and not merely the superficial clichés of parlor psychoanalysis. After all, the record of vulgarized social-work thinking in the field of political remedies, as well as elsewhere, hardly justifies any confident reliance on such thinking in our efforts to face the crucial dangers of our time. The significant answers will remain the traditional answers of democracy, which are not—nor are likely to be—"scientific." There is no magic "key" to be revealed by questionnaires, and we may as well reconcile ourselves to the fact that, no matter what study may reveal, we shall have to continue effectively struggling against Communism with such old-fashioned ideas as education—and reeducation—through the word, printed and oral, and through firm and intelligent opposition.

Three Views of Israel

ISRAEL: THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A STATE. By HARRY SACHER. London, George Weidenfeld & Nicolson. 332 pp. 25 sh.

ISRAEL. By NORMAN BENTWICH. McGraw-Hill. 224 pp. $3.75.

THE NEW STATE OF ISRAEL. By GERALD DE GAURY. New York, Frederic A. Praeger. 259 pp. $3.95.

Reviewed by ROBERT WELTSCH

HARRY SACHER and Norman Bentwich are both prominent English Zionists of long standing, and either might have been expected to offer us that intimate and yet realistically detached account of the Zionist movement which is still so wanting. Both were at one time or another high in the councils of Zionism but neither was personally implicated in the drama that unrolled on Palestinian soil. Mr. Sacher is an impulsive and passionately political mind, an advocate who pleads his cause formidably. Mr. Bentwich, member of a celebrated Anglo-Jewish family, is inclined rather to consider both sides of a question; his approach is highly ethical, Quaker-like, and does not fail to take into account the human element in every political struggle.

ALTHOUGH he devotes relatively little space to this period in his life, Sacher was an important member of the Manchester group that helped Weizmann win British support for Zionism during the 1914-18 war. During the 1920's he was a lawyer in Palestine and a member of the Zionist Executive in Jerusalem. Returning to London in 1929 to direct a large business enterprise, he became one of Weizmann's closest friends and advisers, and occasionally took part in negotiations with political authorities—which may explain the furious outbursts against Ernest Bevin that fill the political half of his book. But his indictment of Bevin adds little to the already publicized official Zionist arguments, and he does not search for the deeper causes of that unfortunate episode in Anglo-Jewish relations. It would have been more enlightening to examine the Palestine problem in relation to the general political situation of the day and against the background of Britain's general Middle East policy. Bevin is severely criticized for his attitude towards Truman, yet his view that the latter's Palestine policy was to a great extent affected by domestic American politics has been confirmed by Forrestal's diaries. Undoubtedly Bevin made a tactical blunder by antagonizing the President, but this is only one aspect of the matter. The whole story of the conflict between Britain and the United States over Palestine has still to be written.

The second part of Mr. Sacher's book is purely military history and describes at length the battles of the Jewish-Arab war of 1948. Inevitably, the question of authenticity arises, since Mr. Sacher does not reveal his sources, apart from acknowledging the assistance of Colonel Alon, one of the Israeli commanders. At least some of the second-hand information

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would appear controversial. The story itself adds up to an unqualified glorification of the Jewish conduct of the war in which there is more than a tinge of self-righteousness. Mr. Sacher bluntly justifies any territorial claim based solely on military conquest, and seems to be fed up with that moralizing hypocrisy which colors so much of modern political oratory.

On the whole, the author follows the line of Hagana historiography, and refrains from criticizing Jewish political or military action, except for some disapproving remarks about the Irgun. In connection with the hanging of British soldiers by Jewish terrorists, he admits that the British troops showed notable self-restraint in the aftermath, and says that "No body of troops from any other country would, in the circumstances, have conducted itself better, and probably none as well"—a remark directed possibly against American criticism of British behavior in Palestine. On the other hand, the statement that the Arab inhabitants of Ramle and Lydda "chose evacuation" does not seem an adequate description of events.

About the future Mr. Sacher is rather vague. In his short concluding chapter he gives a mere sketch of the problems that confront the new state. He is comfortably convinced, however, that the United States will continue to "give more" to Israel.

Mr. Bentwich's book is very different from Mr. Sacher's. Before 1948, Bentwich, like Judah Magnes, advocated a bi-national state for Palestine in which Jews and Arabs could live together. Somehow baffled by the course of history, he now accepts the accomplished facts, but at the same time does not silence his own conscience.

Bentwich is convinced that the Diaspora will continue and will need Israel. He argues against Koestlerian "defeatists" who deny the possibility of Jewish existence outside Israel, as well as against "Israeli zealots" with their "sense of superiority" to all other Jews. With all his admiration of Israel, Mr. Bentwich does not refrain from criticism, especially in regard to Jewish-Arab relations. Speaking of the "ethical teaching" of the Jewish religion, he somewhat naively (or ironically?) expresses surprise that the Religious Bloc in the Knesset has not proposed its application to relations with the Arabs. He explains the omission by Israel's "prepossession with security," which makes her regard the Arabs as a "suspect minority."

The hardships of the Arab refugees and others are due to the refusal of the Arab states to make peace with Israel; therefore, says Bentwich, peace should be made. He does not fully take into account the nature of modern secular nationalism, one of the fundamental factors dominating the situation.

Mr. Bentwich, liberal idealist that he is, sometimes succumbs to the temptation to substitute wishful thinking or optimism for the facts. We all want peace with the Arabs, but the real question is *how* it is to be achieved, and what kind of peace it is to be. That peace can be achieved only through compromise is often obscured by neat formulas. As it happens, the question is complicated in Israel's case by the fact that she is physically unable to make most of the concessions demanded by the other side; such concessions would undermine her very existence. A solution of this problem within a system of nationalist states seems impossible. Yet, if Mr. Bentwich does not tackle the question realistically, he at least stresses its importance.

Colonel de Gaury, a Gentile Englishman, is

the perfect tribute . . .

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This *I Believe*

By Bertrand Russell*

"THERE are certain things that our age needs, and certain things that it should avoid. It needs compassion and a wish that mankind should be happy; it needs the desire for knowledge and the determination to eschew pleasant myths; it needs, above all, courageous hope and the impulse to creativeness. The things that it must avoid, and that have brought it to the brink of catastrophe, are cruelty, envy, greed, competitiveness, search for irrational subjective certainty, and what Freudians call the death wish.

"The root of the matter is a very simple and old-fashioned thing. . . . The thing I mean—please forgive me for mentioning it—is love. . . . If you feel this, you have a motive for existence, a guide in action, a reason for courage, an imperative necessity for intellectual honesty. . . . Although you may not find happiness, you will never know the deep despair of those whose life is aimless and void of purpose; for there is always something that you can do to diminish the awful sum of human misery."

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*from "The Impact of Science on Society", published in 1953

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known as an expert on Middle East affairs. His book is intended to be a reference work, a compendium of information based on material derived mainly from official Israeli publications. It could not be exhaustive, and it is not free from errors. It is at a disadvantage, furthermore, insofar as it is bound to be made obsolete by events. For a Jewish reader, de Gaury's most interesting chapter is his introduction, in which he ventures to give his own views. He does not agree with the Arabs that Israel, for lack of *Lebensraum,* will necessarily seek expansion. Many parts of Israel's present territory are undeveloped and can be made fertile so as to sustain a larger population. To him, Israel is "an unequalled example of the ability of man to overcome the seemingly impossible in colonization," and many hidden possibilities may radically change her position almost overnight. De Gaury also points out that "the character of the Jews in Israel is changing and will probably continue to do so," and therefore assessments made under present circumstances may soon be out of date.

BOOK REVIEWERS IN THIS ISSUE

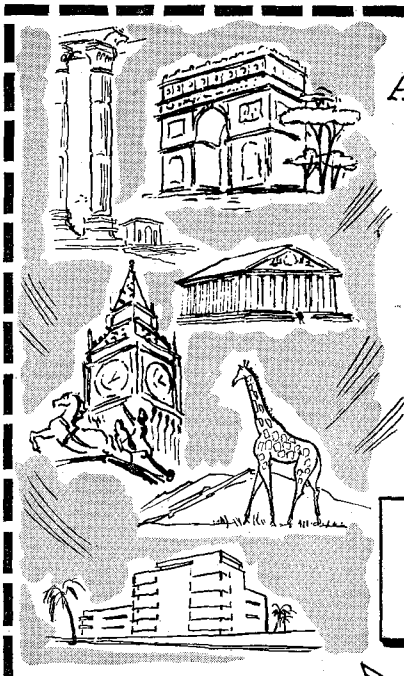
GRANVILLE HICKS is the literary editor of the *New Leader* and author of a number of books. He contributed "Lincoln Steffens: He Covered the Future" to the February 1952 issue of COMMENTARY.

MORRIS FREEDMAN, who teaches English at the City College of New York, has written and reviewed for COMMENTARY.

GEORGE N. SHUSTER is president of Hunter College in New York; he recently served as United States Land Commissioner in Bavaria.

OLIVER SNYDER studied English literature at Columbia University. His review of William Carlos Williams' *The Build-up* appeared in our last issue.

ROBERT WELTSCH, a frequent COMMENTARY contributor, has lived in Israel since 1938. For twenty years before that he was editor of the *Jüdische Rundschau,* official organ of the Zionist Organization in Germany.



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An Idea That Ought To Be Extinct

Scientists were recently surprised to discover a fish they thought had been extinct 75 million years. It seems that this particular fish—with the imposing scientific name of *Coelacanth*—was a long time dying off. Ideas, too, are hard to kill—especially wrong ideas. For example, the idea that all gasolines are just alike.

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